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THE

NUN OF MISERECORDIA.

A ROMANCE.

Lane, Darling, and Co. Leadenhall-Street.

THE

NUN OF MISERECORDIA;

OR,

THE EVE OF ALL SAINTS.

A Romance.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY SOPHIA FRANCES,

AUTHOR OF VIVONIO, CONSTANCE DE LINDENSDORF, &c.

Nor sleep, nor sanctuary,
* * * * * * * * * * *
The prayers of priests, nor times of sacrifice,
————shall lift up
Their privilege and custom 'gainst my hate.
SHAKESPEARE.

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THE

NUN OF MISERECORDIA.

CHAP. I.

IT was on the eve of the celebration of the feast of All-Saints, in the year 1738, that a young and elegantly-dressed female presented herself at the convent belonging to the Casa de Miserecordia in Lisbon, and demanded a private audience of the madre superior, when her request was instantly granted.

This conference lasted above an hour; at the expiration of which time the bell of the superior summoned an attendant

who, on entering the parlour, found the abbess, pale as death, endeavouring to raise the mysterious visitant, who now lay extended on the floor, and apparently in the agonies of death.

The good domina directed the nun to assist in restoring the young stranger to animation; but the affrighted nun would have flown for more assistance, had not the superior, who now attempted to raise the convulsed form of the young stranger, forbade the calling in any further aid; and while involuntary and half-uttered expressions of horror and concern escaped her lips, she eagerly endeavoured to rouse the object of her cares from the hysteric oppression under which she laboured.

The efforts of the good domina at length succeeded, and a penetrating, though ghastly stare, from the young female, evinced that she had recovered her perception. Suddenly turning her eyes from the superior, she perceived the nun who had been summoned, and, with a haughty and confused

fused look, requested that she might be shewn to the cell which was to be henceforth allotted to her use.

The superior, scarcely less embarrassed, directed the nun to lead the senora to the apartment where some of the novices were assembled at work; and thither the stranger was immediately conducted, followed by the domina, by whom she was introduced as a future sister.

With a degree of collected self-importance, which was almost incredible after her recent agitation, she went through the short ceremony of introduction, and effectually checked every emotion but those of curiosity and dislike in the bosoms of the young novices, to whom she had been introduced; and their looks quickly informed each other with what sentiments the new sister Magdalena had inspired each.

The stranger, however, although she had sufficient penetration to instantly perceive the unfavourable impression her haughty

and cold looks and air had made on her future companions, was too insensible to the blessings of meek and quiet friendship to set any value on the good opinion of others; she, therefore, without deigning to soften her manner, again demanded to be shewn to her cell—to the solitude of which, and her own reflections, she was soon left, while a thousand curious conjectures concerning her, employed the fancies of those to whom she had been introduced. All agreed that the new sister was extremely handsome, and her superb dress and magnificent jewels inspired an idea that her rank must necessarily be exalted. This latter consideration had but too soon the mean and erroneous effect of rendering many of the novices rather more indulgent in their animadversions; and it was now hoped that the sister Magdalena, on being better known, would prove infinitely pious, meek, and kind.

This hope, however, was crushed on the day after the celebration of the feast of All-

All-Saints, when Magdalena, who, during the feast, had been confined by illness to her cell, entered the refectory in the noviciate habit. Impressed with the illusive respect to her supposed rank, the noviciates shewed her a thousand little attentions, which were received with coldness, and every effort of kindness repulsed with chilling indifference. A severe and almost ghastly melancholy shaded the really beautiful features of the haughty Magdalena, and evinced that a deep and corrosive grief lived in her breast, and would soon despoil her of the youthful graces which distinguished her face and form. She was not very tall, but her figure was marked by that character, which, without being masculine, is not many degrees removed; and the contour of her countenance was but too expressive of pride and vindictive cunning; while her eyes, which were of a greenish cast, had alternately a bold and sly glance, which betrayed depravity and malice—still she was handsome, and an inaccurate ob-

server would have perceived in her the indications only of a haughty spirit, and a levity untamed by affliction.

From the moment of her entrance into the convent till the hour in which she took the last veil, her conduct never varied —silent, gloomy, and repulsive in her manner, she was equally austere in discipline; and, could voluntary penances, and inflictions unnumbered, devoid of Christian piety, have made a saint, the sister Magdalena had surely been one.

In the exercise of the charitable assistance which the rules of the order she had embraced enjoined, she was ever punctual and diligent; nor could those who most disliked the austerity of her character, accuse her of the least neglect or unkindness to the objects whom it was their duty to attend. It was, however, observed, that the sister Magdalena was rather more assiduous in her attendance on any native of France, whom misfortune had placed under her care, than she was to those of other nations;

nations; and she had not unfrequently been heard to enquire respecting the noble family of St. Viviers, an ancient house of Dauphiny; and most particularly did the sister Magdalena endeavour to discover whether the present Marquis St. Viviers had received any intelligence of his only brother, a young man who had clandestinely quitted his home, and totally disappeared. Vain, however, were all the enquiries of Magdalena—few of those whom affliction submitted to her care knew the family of St. Viviers; and those who were in some degree acquainted with their residence, could only assure her, that the haughty and reserved disposition of the Marquis St. Viviers was such as effectually precluded any but his most intimate friends from being acquainted with his private concerns.

During the course of sixteen years, Magdalena ceased not her efforts to learn some intelligence relative to the St. Viviers; and, at length, on the eve of the fatal first

of November, 175*b*, she was informed by a French soldier in the hospital, that the long-missed Count St. Viviers had recently returned from the West Indies, where he had acquired an immense fortune by marriage—that his lady was dead, and that himself, and an only daughter, were at that moment at the palace of Don Sebastino de Selvas in Lisbon, from which he intended to depart for France in less than a week.

The agitation which Magdalena betrayed, while, with eager attention and pallid looks, she listened to the above information, evinced to her companion, an ancient sister of the same order, that the Count St. Viviers was connected with the secret cause of all her gloomy sorrow; but the dismay which seized the venerable sister Agatha, on beholding Magdalena fall on her knees, and, with uplifted eyes and hands, vow that the Count should *never* more reach his native country, may be more easily imagined than described.

Magdalena, almost momentarily recovering

vering from the frantic emotion of cherished malice, caught the eye of Agatha fixed upon her with a look of horror, and immediately aware of the rashness of her expression, sought to recall it, and confusedly added, that she meant St. Viviers should not return without doing her justice, as he had once much injured her.

Sister Agatha affected to be convinced, but she well discerned *that* in the countenance of Magdalena which belied her words. Resolved therefore to watch the actions of her companion, the ancient nun feigned a headach and drowsiness, and once more took her seat near the invalid, while Magdalena, with trembling hands and perturbed air, prepared for him a medicinal draught, which she gave to the soldier, and then, drawing closer her veil, retired to an obscure corner of the room, where she sat absorbed in meditation.

The humane Agatha continued for some time to observe her, but perceiving that she

sat in her usual gloomy reverie, the venerable sister felt her own suspicions and fears subside, and, relaxing her watchful attention, sunk gradually into a slumber produced by weariness and age.

The artful Magdalena soon perceived the situation of her companion, and with silent and speedy step quitted the room, and fled from the hospital.

CHAP. II.

WITH a degree of swiftness, which the ardour of keen revenge enabled her to use, she hastily passed along the steep and narrow streets which led from that part of the town where the hospital stood to the large square of the Ruccio, and soon reached the residence of Don Sebastino. As she walked across the square, however, her eye fell on the dark prison of the Inquisition, and she paused. A slight terror shuddered in her bosom as her fancy vividly represented the dreadful punishment to which her meditated crime might expose her, if indeed it should ever be

discovered. The bell of the Dominican church, on the other side of the square, mournfully tolled the hour of vespers, and the solemn sound increased the tremulous perturbation of Magdalena's guilty mind. She hastily walked a few steps towards the hospital which faced the church, and there is a faint probability that her cherished crime might no longer have been intended, had she not heard two black slaves, whose magnificent dress proved them to belong to some noble family, mention the name of the Count St. Viviers.

Eager curiosity instantly banished terror from the mind of the lost Magdalena. She followed the steps of the slaves—they were conversing on the subject of a projected marriage, which was expected to take place between some young nobleman and Mademoiselle St. Viviers, spoke in raptures of her goodness and beauty, and extolled the urbanity and generosity of their lord, the Count, whom they affirmed to be doatingly fond of his daughter.

A thousand horrible wishes of immolating this beloved daughter at the shrine of revenge, now sprung up in the breast of the wretched sister of Miserecordia, as she still continued to follow the slaves to the door of Don Sebastino de Selvas, and which they reached in a few minutes.

Magdalena glanced her eyes on the latticed balconies, and, ere the slaves had entered the door, begged, in the name of the Virgin, that she might be permitted to see the excellent and amiable Donna St. Viviers, whom she wished, she said, to interest in behalf of an unhappy penitent, who, expiring in the Casa de Miserecordia, would petition forgiveness of the good Count St. Viviers, whom the penitent had once grossly misused.

One of the slaves instantly conducted the sister into an elegant saloon near the vestibule, and said the Count should be immediately informed of her request; adding, with the enthusiastic marks of attachment which gentleness and liberality almost

almost ever inspire in the bosoms of those of his colour, that his good Lord never denied to see the poor, or to forgive those who were sorry for their faults.

A pang of indescribable anguish pierced the heart of Magdalena as the slave withdrew; franticly she wrung her hands, and mentally exclaimed—"Oh, Louis!—ungrateful!—barbarous alone to me!—while thousands bless thy name, my lips shall utter the keen execrations of injured love, of ruined honour, and burning vengeance. May the hour——"

The sound of voices interrupted the horrible malediction which hovered on her lips, and the door opened.

With bursting heart, and pale cheeks, Magdalena beheld a lovely girl, followed by an elderly female, enter the room.

"The Count, my father," said the young lady, in a voice of sweetest gentleness, "is at present engaged on the most important concern, and cannot possibly now see you, good sister. In less than an hour he will attend;

attend; and, in the mean time, deputes me to hear your request, and to assure you that he feels the deepest interest to hear your tale."

While Mademoiselle St. Viviers spoke, Magdalena stood, with her face partly shaded by her veil, gazing, with a wild and fixed look, on the beautiful girl, whose form and face, while they bore the stamp of more than human beauty, struck the sister of Miserecordia with a strong resemblance of a once loved object.

Quelling the emotion which laboured in her breast, Magdalena crossed her arms on her bosom, and, bowing with an assumed air of meekness, attempted to give softness to her hollow voice, and said—"Young lady, the condescending affability with which you treat a poor nun of Miserecordia is so convincing a proof of the excellence of your nature, that I should be most ungrateful were I not to henceforth pray our Holy Mother to guard you from all dangers; but the business which has

has brought me here demands the strictest privacy."

Mademoiselle St. Viviers now intimated to the elderly person who had attended her into the room, that she might withdraw. Her look was immediately obeyed. Turning once more towards Magdalena, the young lady requested her to sit down, and said—"The agitation and fatigue which it is evident so violently affect you, holy sister, render composure and refreshment essential; and, although I certainly do feel anxious to hear your communication, yet I must not suffer you to exert yourself till you are more tranquil, and have taken some refreshment."

The artless candour, and elegant manner of the young Adelaide, produced no other effect on the unworthy object of her attentions, than that of encreasing her growing dislike to an amiable being, whose disposition and principles were so unlike her own.

Veiling, with consummate hypocrisy, the rancour of her heart, sister Magdalena sat down,

down, and, with a deep sigh, affected to confess that fatigue and sorrow had indeed almost overpowered her spirits.

The brilliant light from a large chandelier, illuminated with wax candles, fell on the nun, as she, with humble mein, took a seat on the sofa, and beheld her own thin, yet gaunt figure, reflected in a large Venetian mirror, and that of Adelaide St. Viviers, whose nymph-like form, and lovely face, presented a contrast which filled the breast of Magdalena with fresh emotions of hatred and revenge. Ungoverned passions are more certain destoyers than even age. The nun was not forty, yet she looked the image of haggard, care-worn sixty. The sunken, half-closed eye of brooding malice, gave an air of gloomy slyness and severity to her contracted brow, while her pale, hollow cheek, and scornful lip, completed the expression of the discontent and self-importance that marked her countenance. Nor had the criminal indulgence of unsubdued hatred and wounded pride,

effected

effected a less disadvantageous change in her person—the haughty air and contour of her full, graceful figure, had given place to the bend of pining trouble, and the ghastly meagreness of extreme austerity.

With a sensation of sickly disgust, and determined malice, she turned from the view of her own resemblance, which the mirror but too faithfully reflected, and contemplated the shadow of the blooming Adelaide, who at this moment leaned towards her, as she stood by the side of the sofa, tenderly compassionating the illness and affliction which she imagined to be the causes of the poor nun's depression and miserable looks.

A white silk robe, simply ornamented with pearl, and her light brown hair fastened up with a bunch of the same, gave a simple elegance to the form of Adelaide; and which was the more strikingly becoming in those days, when formal stiffness and loaded ornaments were the most prevalent features in female dress.

After

After a silence of a minute, sister Magdalena said—"You are very fair, young lady. Your ivory complexion, your dark blue eyes, and light hair, would prevent any person, unacquainted with the truth, from supposing that you are a native of the West Indies, or that your mother was a Portuguese. Pardon the liberty I take, but I am old, and my renunciation of the world may excuse my present rudeness."

"You are not rude, my good madre," replied the lovely Adelaide, placing herself on the sofa beside the nun; "I am glad that you feel yourself so far forgetful of your sorrows as to think of indifferent subjects. But you are mistaken in supposing me a native of the warm climate of the West Indies; I was born in Franche Compte——"

"Where!" exclaimed Magdalena, hastily grasping the hand of the now alarmed Adelaide, who, slightly attempting to disengage her hand from the convulsive grasp of

of the nun, faintly repeated—"In Franche Compte."

"How long since?" cried Magdalena, still in the same attitude and tone.

"Seventeen years since—on this night, the eve of All-Saints, I entered the world in the castle of my mother."

"On that night!" muttered the nun, while her whole form seemed convulsed with the violence of her emotion—"On that night!—the eve of All-Saints! And when was he married, young lady?"

"About fifteen months prior to the period of my birth, I believe, my good madre; but on this point I cannot give you full information, as the marriage of my parents was for some time unacknowledged."

"But your father was in Portugal about that time, Mademoiselle?" asked the nun, with affected composure.

"I think that I have heard my mother say he was," replied Adelaide, as if recollecting—

lecting—"I believe some business relative to a relation of my mother's caused my father to make a private journey into Portugal, but I am not certain."

"The treachery unheard of sanctifies revenge," exclaimed the nun, in a low and hollow tone, and sunk back on the sofa, while the amiable and terrified Adelaide flew to call assistance, but was quickly recalled by the entreaties of the mysterious visitant, who now revived, and, with a look expressive of grief and shame, attempted to rise and apologize to Mademoiselle St. Viviers for having caused her so much alarm.

"Alas," continued the nun, "I am but too subject to these fits. A dreadful calamity occurred to me on this day seventeen years, and the recollection——but—the cause of my sorrows may not long exist."

The hidden meaning of the nun's words was unknown to Adelaide; and, imagining that Magdalena might be more composed when she had revealed the occasion of her visit

visit to the Count, the amiable girl once more dismissed the attendants, and then begged the nun to let her know the motive of her seeking her father, and in what manner he could serve her?

Magdalena paused for some moments, and, pressing her hand on her forehead and eyes, endeavoured to collect the desperate resolution of either instantly plunging a concealed dagger she always wore into the bosom of the amiable being, who, with benignant tenderness, was soothing her spirits, or await an opportunity of assailing the life of the Count himself. A momentary reflection served to prove to her subtle mind, that to deprive the man she hated of an idolized child, whose beauty and virtues seemed to promise all that the most anxious father could desire, would be a more sure revenge than even should she take his own life, and she instantly determined that Adelaide should be the sacrifice. But, although Magdalena had been ever intent on wreaking a signal vengeance on St. Viviers,

St. Viviers, yet as her hand sought the dagger in the folds of her grey robe, an involuntary hesitation seized her, and, ere she could find the poniard, the door opened, and the Count St. Viviers himself entered.

His sudden entrance, and the consciousness of the act she had been on the point of committing, overwhelmed the guilty Magdalena with a momentary confusion; and, drawing her veil closer, she stood silent and confused.

"I am now at leisure to attend to your wishes, my good madre," said the Count, with grave affability. "Do not stand."

The Count pointed to the sofa, and was himself taking a chair, when the nun advanced towards him, and silently presented to his view a glittering ring, and, throwing back her veil, murmured in a voice rendered hoarse by agitation—"*Elvira, and the Eve of All-Saints.*"

The Count glanced his eyes from the ring to the face of the nun; and, after a moment

moment of silent horror and confusion, faintly exclaimed—"Can this be possible!"

A faint convulsive laugh was Magdalena's answer.

The Count shuddered, and then turning towards the astonished Adelaide, gently commanded her to withdraw. Perceiving she hesitated, he took her hand, and, leading her to the door, said—"I receive my beloved Adelaide's hesitation to comply with my commands, not as a proof of want of duty, but as one of tender love. Be not alarmed, my child—retire—I am not quite unacquainted with this sister."

Still Adelaide clung to the hand of her parent, who seriously whispered, that he requested she would endeavour to suppress such indications of causeless alarm; and then, suspecting that her timid fear might cause her to linger near the door of the apartment, and possibly overhear a few words of a transaction he by no means wished to be made public, he, in a tone more peremptory than the amiable girl had

had ever before heard from her father, commanded her to retire to her own apartment.

Adelaide turned pale, and most reluctantly obeyed.

No sooner had she disappeared than the Count locked the door, and approaching Magdalena, said, in a mournful and agitated tone—"We cannot now fear interruption. Say, then, unhappy Elvira, why you now seek me, and tell me in what manner can I evince my hope, that a never-ceasing repentance for the crime which my ——"

"Repentance!" echoed the nun, in a tone of rage, "where are the tokens of repentance?—is that erect and noble form —those beaming eyes and raven hair, the marks of repentance? Has penitence bent thy form to the earth, robbed thy eyes of lustre, and silvered with affliction's hue thy head? No—you still retain the traces of that image which has never been a moment absent from my memory. At the

foot of the altar—in the hours of silent watching by the sick—in the glare of day, and in the midnight hour—your's is the resemblance that has haunted me. Yet think not, proud, vain insensate, that love presented thy image to my mind. Look on me well—what are the characters deep—deep imprinted on my altered features? Are these the pensive lines of fond recollection and pining tenderness?—Oh, no—they are the dark traces of the feelings which consume my soul—a burning thirst of just revenge has withered my form—undying hatred has fixed the stamp of premature age and severity in my face, and blighted all the softer feelings of my soul."

She paused a moment, but her glaring eye remained rivetted on St. Viviers, who stood as if petrified by astonishment, grief, and horror. A malignant sneer now crossed her pallid features, and, in accents expressive of mingled contempt and scorn, she continued—"And thou wert married, when thy depraved heart and treacherous tongue

tongue conceived and executed the plan of my undoing; and thou hast exulted in the fond security which thy arts had taught thee to hope was certain. But hear me, thou coward runaway! To ensure this hour of vengeance, have I toiled unceasingly in the wily paths of deceit—to discover thee have I profaned the sacred order of holy charity; and while my form was clad in the robe of mercy, and my hands administered to the wants of pain and affliction, my soul has cherished, with secret and enthusiastic fervour, the anticipation of this hour—this hour, in which my wrongs shall sound in thy guilty ears like the voice of thunder, and my vengeful glance be fatal to thee as the lightning's flash!—Ha! shrinkest thou in horror from my gaze! Seducer!—adulterer! Learn then to what excess I loved, by the unbounded rage of revenge which fills my soul—had you been but one moment later, my vengeance had been most certain, for thy Adelaide, thy boasted, thy adored

child, had been extended a corpse at thy feet—murdered by me—by me, the miserable, the abandoned victim of thy deceptive arts."

St. Viviers, rouzed instantaneously from the silence of apparent remorse, haughtily exclaimed, "You dared not do a deed so foul!"

"Dared not!" loudly repeated the nun —"dared not! Then know, thou proud insolent," she added, lowering her voice to the hollow murmur of innate malignancy, "that these hands have dared to send to everlasting silence the detested memento of my shame and ruin—the offspring of adulterous and credulous passion! Ay, 'tis most true!—stand, pale and horror-struck, poor feeble being! become transformed into the cold statue of amazement—for 'tis most true. No sooner was I convinced that your flight was premeditated and secret, than I rightly judged you had for ever deserted me. From that moment of conviction my now indelible hatred

hatred commenced. I saw your image in the infant I had fondly cherished at my breast, and I dashed it as a serpent from my heart, and on its cold remains breathed forth a vow of vengeance. The shadowy form of my child pursues me, and cries aloud for justice on that wretch who gave him being, and, by the cruel concealment of his sacred engagements with another, plunged me into ruin."

With a frantic shriek she sprung towards the unfortunate Count, and, with the rapidity of lightning, plunged the poniard into his breast.

St. Viviers fell—Magdalena gazed on him for a moment—her fury subsided, and she coolly said—"Your life has paid the forfeit of your treachery; my revenge is in some degree satisfied, and I am resolved to meet my punishment with the intrepidity which becomes me."

The Count, half weltering in his blood, raised his head, and faintly said—"Fly, unfortunate, lost Elvira. Oh, fly! and let

thy future hours be those of penitence. My fate is severe, but what will thy feelings be, when thou shalt learn that ——."

Faint and exhausted he fell back, his eyes closed, and the hand of death pressed on his brow.

Magdalena unlocked the door, and loudly summoned the attendants.

The alarm her cry caused quickly brought some of the domestics and slaves; but first appeared the hapless Adelaide, followed by an elegant young man, whose air and habit denoted his superior rank.

One glance at the bleeding form of her parent deprived Adelaide of sensibility; and the scene of terror and horror which ensued baffled description; till at length an English surgeon, then resident at Lisbon, and who had been called in with other medical men, positively assured the horror-struck throng, that the Count had only fainted through loss of blood, and that there was a possibility that his wounds were not dangerous.

Meantime

Meantime Adelaide recovered, and when the wound of the Count had been properly attended to, she was permitted to enter his chamber.

That dear parent knew his lovely child, and his languid eyes rested on her with an expression of pious gratitude to Heaven, that she, his dearest treasure, had escaped the horrible revenge of the vindictive Magdalena, who meanwhile had calmly resigned herself to the domestics, and was closely confined in a chamber of the palace, till she should be placed under the care of those who were authorized by the law to take cognizance of her crime.

CHAP. III.

THE night passed in all the anxiety and fear which such an event was likely to produce; Adelaide never quitted her station beside the couch of her father; but the young Count St. Croix (the nobleman to whom she was to be united immediately on their return to France) visited the room in which Magdalena was confined, and, after informing her that the Count St. Viviers still lived, said, that the latter, in consequence of some circumstances long past, had resolved to permit her to escape; the doors of her prison were therefore no longer fastened.

Magdalena

Magdalena sullenly and in silence accepted the permission to leave the palace; and St. Croix, with an emotion of the keenest reluctance and horror, beheld her depart.

The morning dawned as he conducted her through a private walk in the gardens to a door which opened into a retired street. A heavy depression, an unaccountable dread, hung over the spirits of St. Croix; he returned to the chamber of St. Viviers, and intimated that his orders had been obeyed.

The young Count then proposed relieving his Adelaide from her watchful task, but the amiable girl could not be prevailed upon to quit the room long.

Early in the morning the different processions commenced, and the streets of Lisbon were filled with throngs hastening towards the different churches and chapels, to the celebration of the first mass.

The morning was clear and serene, and a light breeze wafted the tall trees and

shrubs before the windows of the Count's apartment. Don Sebastino and many of the domestics were gone to mass, and the English surgeon had just entered the room to enquire after his noble patient, when the first tremendous shock of the memorable earthquake, which, on the feast of All-Saints, in the year 1755, laid Lisbon in ruins, was felt.

The crash of falling buildings, the shrieks of innumerable sufferers, soon filled the air.

At this dreadful moment, St. Croix, who had been compelled by urgent business to hasten about an hour before to a distant part of the city, was passing from the Terreiro de Passa on his return.

For a moment he was senseless, but returning recollection flashed on his distracted mind the too probable fate of his Adelaide and her father.

With frantic speed he hastened onward amid the darkening clouds of dust and falling edifices, or heaps of ruins, from which issued the last shrieks and groans of the

the dying. Here, clusters of miserable beings on their knees at prayers, and loudly calling on heaven and each other for forgiveness, impeded his proceeding; there, priests in their richest vestments were seen absolving the distracted multitude, while churches, palaces, and hovels, mingled in one common ruin, effectually checked his course.

The horror and consternation of the hour was soon increased by the dreadful certainty that the city was in flames, and that the sea had rushed with impetuous fury into the lower parts of the town.

In vain St Croix wildly exerted every effort to force his way through the shrieking crowds, and he found himself hurried along towards the heights beyond the ruined city.

Arrived in the open fields, he at length disengaged himself, and once more flew to the town, from which volumes of flame and smoke fiercely arose. Passing swiftly through several streets, in which the shat-

nor yet of his illustrious guests; but it was to be hoped that at least the Lady Adelaide must have escaped, as several of the household had time to fly ere the palace fell.

An agony of mute despair overwhelmed the senses of the miserable St Croix; he fell lifeless on the earth, and some time elapsed ere the humane efforts of the friar could restore him to the least sensibility.

Exhausted, and deprived of every hope of again beholding his Adelaide in this life, St. Croix suffered the father to lead him towards Belem, when they suddenly encountered a young English naval officer, and several sailors, whom the former was animating, by every expression of courage and humanity, to follow him into the burning city, in order to seek a beloved sister, whose fate was as yet unascertained.

The sinking spirits of St. Croix were instantaneously rouzed by the conduct of the young Englishman; he knew enough of the English language to enable him to address

address the officer, and to entreat that he might be allowed to join him in his research.

Captain Vernor, perceiving the wild and disordered air of the unhappy St. Croix, easily conjectured that the latter wished to accompany him, in the hope of finding some dear friend, who was involved in the calamity which had ruined the happiness of thousands; and, with all the blunt good nature which characterizes a British sailor, instantly assented, and promised to give St. Croix every assistance in his power.

Faint, however, were the hopes of St. Croix. The Ruccio, he learned from the friar, had not only suffered severely in the first shocks, but the fire had also extended thither; and unless a miracle had rescued his Adelaide, she no longer existed.

The night was not dark, but vast columns of smoke enshrouded the city in clouds, through which glared the lurid flames, whose dreadful illumination added

a thousand horrors to the scene. The sailors had several torches, which enabled them to keep rather clear of the human bodies scattered around.

The convent towards which Captain Vernor was hastening, was situated in the district of Alfama, and this part was fortunately not penetrated by the fire. But alas! the convent was found almost laid in ruins, and desertion and death alone reigned.

The young Englishman, but too well convinced that his beloved sister had perished, was deeply affected; but his own sorrows could not render him selfishly insensible to the superior misery of St. Croix, whose wild glances were directed towards that part of the city where the fire raged most fiercely, while his faltering tongue pronounced the name of Adelaide, in accents of the deepest despair. The impossibility of reaching the centre of Lisbon was, however, but too evident, and these companions in affliction

tion were compelled to retreat from the fatal ruins.

As they proceeded to the nearest gate leading from the city, Captain Vernor perceived a small group of people standing near the ruins of an ancient building; they were in the attitude of listening, and ere Vernor could request to know what had engaged their attention, and whether he could assist them in any way, faint and repeated shrieks were heard. Vernor was on the point of expressing his fears that some person was buried deep beneath the ruins, when he suddenly missed St. Croix from his side, and in a moment after beheld him, with a lighted torch in his hand, plunge into a half-demolished area, and make a desperate effort to burst a door which barred his proceeding. Quickly calling to some of the sailors to follow, Captain Vernor leaped down in the area; and the sailors immediately obeying his command to follow, the door was soon

forced,

forced, and the whole party rushed through into a large vaulted cellar.

St. Croix, brandishing the high-raised torch, rushed wildly forward, and, in a tone of frantic terror, called loudly on the name of Adelaide.

No answer was returned, but two female figures were soon perceived in an obscure part of the vault, while a voice, which froze the soul of St. Croix, fiercely exclaimed—"Advance but one step farther, and this poniard makes my victim sure!"

It was that of Magdalena.

"Oh, murdress! cruel and insatiate," cried the miserable St. Croix, while terror for the life of his Adelaide checked his steps, and caused him to motion his companions to keep back, "cannot the awful horrors which surround you soften the obduracy of thy heart?"

Scarce had he spoke, when the earth trembled beneath his feet, and a slight shock followed, while a part of the vaulted area,

area, above the spot where the fiend-like Magdalena held the fainting Adelaide, fell in.

The affrighted sailors started, but fled not from the vault, while St. Croix, alive only to the fate of his Adelaide, and Vernor, influenced by the noblest feelings of humanity, sprung forward in the hope of extricating her from the ruins. With what joy, what gratitude to Heaven, did they find, that the massy stone-work had fallen in such a direction as not to injure her, while the abandoned Magdalena had been crushed beneath its ponderous weight!

St. Croix eagerly raised the lovely girl in his arms, and Captain Vernor preceded them out of the vault. The open air, although so strongly impregnated with the smoke from the fire, had sufficient power to revive Adelaide; but it was not till they had reached the fields that she spoke, or appeared to be entirely sensible of her situation; and the first words she uttered were

were the names of her father and St. Croix.

At the moment she spoke, they were passing a tent, from which issued a glare of light. St. Croix, anxious only to find a shelter for the beloved treasure of his heart, precipitately entered, and found himself in the presence of the amiable Marchioness de Elva, a lady at whose splendid palace in Lisbon he had often visited.

She was weeping, and almost surrounded by fellow-sufferers, whom humanity had induced her to invite into her tent; but on beholding Adelaide, whom she estimated as the most amiable of her sex, the Marchioness instantly offered her an asylum; and having had her placed on some mats and straw, which had been hastily provided for her own use, prevailed upon her to swallow a small quantity of wine.

Adelaide obeyed in silence; she clasped the hand of her benevolent friend, and with

with eyes fixed on St. Croix, seemed to gaze on him with a look of incredulity.

He knelt beside her, and took her hand in his.

"It is your Henry, my Adelaide," he whispered.

"And you live!" she replied, while tears stole from beneath her burning eyelids; and she raised her looks towards Heaven, faintly adding, "My father."

The Count St. Croix, well knowing the generous tenderness of her heart, softly replied, "My Adelaide is not alone in misery—thousands surround her, who loudly lament the loss of parents—relations—all —."

She drooped her head on the arm of the Marchioness, who with maternal kindness watched over her, and after a few minutes assumed a calmness which partly concealed the internal anguish of her heart.

Captain Vernor, on seeing Adelaide in safety, had almost instantly quitted the tent, and departed in search of some friends, whom

whom he hoped to find amid the multitude of unhappy sufferers, either encamped or without shelter on the hills. But he had been gone but a few minutes, when a gentleman entering the tent, informed the Marchioness, that her friend Don Sebastino de Selvas, and most of his household, had perished in the fall of one of the great churches, when they were attending mass.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

THIS information added new pangs to the agonizing grief of Adelaide, while St. Croix, almost equally miserable at the fate of the Count and his friends, in vain attempted to speak to her in the language of consolation.

As the alarm and dread of such a period banished all ceremony, situations, which at any other time would have been deemed highly indelicate, were now tolerated by the severe and general calamity; and there the Count St. Croix scarcely quitted the tent of the Marchioness during the night, and then only for a few minutes, to seek amid

amid the crowd some slight refreshment for those within.

In this he partly succeeded; for some people, more courageous than others, had even ventured into the city for provisions, and were rewarded for their temerity by receiving the most generous remunerations.

But, alas! each morsel was wetted by tears, and swallowed in dread; and the momentary expectation, that other convulsions of the earth would entomb them alive, filled every bosom.

St. Croix, convinced that the unfortunate Count St. Viviers, confined as he was at the moment to his bed, must have been buried in the ruins of Don Sebastino de Selvas' palace, determined to remove his Adelaide from Portugal, the moment he could procure a passage for her and himself in any vessel. Yet, as some explanation was nevertheless requisite, he ventured to enquire of Adelaide, whether she had any hope which might induce her

to

to wish to remain in Portugal for any time.

She replied—"No, my father's fate is too certain; he is indeed no more; but I cannot now explain how I came to be certain of this dreadful fact. In pity, Count, ask me no farther; let it suffice that I am ready to go; and even the death of Don Sebastino has deprived me of every wish of remaining any longer here."

There was a shuddering horror in the manner of Adelaide, which convinced her lover that some further mysterious circumstances had attended the death of the Count, her father; and he made no doubt but that the cruel Magdalena was but too nearly concerned in the circumstance.

The manner in which Adelaide had avoided all explanation forbade any further enquiry; and St. Croix now directed all his thoughts to the obtaining a passage from Portugal. To effect this, however, it seemed necessary that he should leave Mademoiselle St. Viviers for some hours.

This idea filled him with the most cruel fears, lest during their separation some new shock might divide them for ever in this world.

From these distracting fears, St. Croix was at length relieved by the appearance of Captain Vernor, who soon entered the tent, with the pleasing intelligence that he had found his sister, who had been most providentially rescued from the fate which had involved so many thousands in death and ruin.

Captain Vernor received all the congratulations which the moment admitted of; and, on learning St. Croix's wish of immediately removing Mademoiselle St. Viviers from Portugal, said, that he was intimately acquainted with the master of a French trading vessel bound for Rochefort. This person he had but a few moments before encountered, and had learnt, that he intended sailing the next tide if possible. "Monsieur La Val," continued Captain Vernor, "happened to be on shore at the moment

moment of the dreadful calamity of yesterday; his son, a very good young man, was at the same time at the house of a merchant at Lisbon, and the alarmed father, who has so fortunately escaped death, would not seek safety on board his vessel till he had diligently sought his son, whom he has at length had the felicity of finding. They are now in waiting for me at a few paces distant, for as I cannot yet quit Lisbon myself, I mean to intrust my sister to the care of M. La Val, who will place her as a boarder in a convent till she can be properly conducted to England."

This intelligence was most joyfully received by St. Croix; and it was immediately agreed that M. La Val should be requested to accommodate Mademoiselle St. Viviers and the Count St. Croix with a passage to Rochefort.

As an immediate departure now became necessary, M. La Val was summoned to the tent of the Marchioness, and Captain Ver-

the terrific sight, while Henrietta's tears and sighs augmented. Where, indeed, could they look, and not behold every species of woe? Even on the decks of the vessels in the river innumerable crowds were collected, who, with streaming eyes and broken lamentations, gazed in indescribable anguish on the wrecks of all they held most dear—the common tomb of parents, children, friends, and property.

The vessel had not proceeded far down the river, when a boat rowed rapidly towards it, approached, and shewed an order to forbid the departure of any vessels till they had undergone a search, as the dreadful robberies already committed in the city rendered it essential that all who were departing should be examined.

This circumstance occasioned a delay of some days, during which sad space almost daily shocks had been felt on shore, and the vessels on the Tagus were much agitated by the sudden rising and falling of the waters.

To

To Adelaide this delay gave, on her own account, no new pain; piously resigned to the will of Heaven, she meekly endured every distress, and learnt the lessons of fortitude from witnessing the dreadful and awfully impressive scenes which on all sides surrounded her.

On the fourth day Captain Vernor unexpectedly came on board, and was received by his sister with all the affecting demonstrations of joy that a virtuous mind, deeply afflicted by the almost universal calamity which it contemplated, could express; nor was Adelaide or St. Croix scarcely less gratified on seeing the brave Vernor, and finding that he was now at liberty to accompany them on their voyage, they proceeded in a few days.

CHAP. V.

AFTER a long and dangerous voyage the vessel arrived at Rochefort, but in a very shattered condition. The fatigues and inconveniences to which the unhappy passengers had been exposed were indescribably great; none had left Lisbon with even a change of clothes; and though many were still opulent, yet they had suffered every deprivation of the lowest poverty.

The only personal property which Adelaide had saved, was a small ivory box, which the Count St. Viviers, on the fatal moment which preceded his last separation from

from his child, had given her. This she had almost instantly placed in her pocket, and still retained: but as her rank and that of the Count St. Croix were soon made known, there was no possible apprehension to be entertained of their not finding every accommodation on their landing. But, alas! the situation of the lovely unfortunate girl was such, that her life appeared to be near the close, and she was conveyed to an hotel in the most faint and languid state.

Henrietta Vernor, who possessed a lively and yet gentle disposition, had formed during their sad voyage the most ardent friendship for Mademoiselle St. Viviers, and now, with all the care of sisterly affection, watched beside her, while her brother was no less assiduous in calming the fears and distracting anxieties of the Count St. Croix, who dreaded that every coming moment might consign his Adelaide to death.

Nearly a month elapsed ere she was pro-

nounced out of danger, and letters were then dispatched to the Marquis St. Viviers, in Dauphiny, to inform him of the preservation of his niece, and the decease of his brother.

As Adelaide recovered, the party had leisure to listen to the various terrific reports which were spread concerning the earthquake which had ruined Lisbon. The south of Europe had in many parts experienced its dreadful effects, and the most frightful and exaggerated accounts were believed and repeated.

Before the courier who had been dispatched into Dauphiny returned, Captain Vernor departed for England; but, yielding to the united entreaties of Mademoiselle St. Viviers and his sister, he had consented that the latter should pass a month in Dauphiny with her amiable friends.

A few days after his departure, the Marquis St. Viviers, attended by a large retinue, arrived. Adelaide until now had never beheld the brother of her lamented

father, and as he approached to embrace her, she sunk fainting at his feet; his air, his face, and figure, so strongly resembled those of the Count St. Viviers, that the sudden surprise was more than her weak spirits could support.

On recovering, she found herself supported in his arms, but had nearly relapsed on hearing the tone of his voice, for scarcely could the nicest ear distinguish any difference from that of her father.

The Marquis was all pity, sympathy, and tenderness, and soon succeeded in rendering his niece more composed. To St. Croix he was polite, but not very cordial; while to Miss Vernor he paid the most insinuating attentions.

Soon after dinner the Marquis had a private interview with Adelaide, in which he questioned her respecting the certainty of his brother's death.

Pale and agitated she requested to be allowed to avoid dwelling on the manner of her father's death, as least for the pre-

sent, and then solemnly declared that he was but too surely no more.

The Marquis easily perceived that some singular mystery had attended the last moments of the Count St. Viviers; but anxious as he felt to be convinced of the truth of the fact, he yet could not unfeelingly urge his niece further on the subject, and therefore turned the conversation, by enquiring whether she intended to fulfil her engagements with the Count St. Croix?

Adelaide timidly replied in the affirmative; but observed, that her present mournful state of mind, and the respect she owed to the memory of her father, would defer that event for a year.

The Marquis highly commended the prudence and piety of her determination, and then said—"As you resolve not to unite yourself to the Count till the expiration of that time, may I not hope that you will fix your residence at my castle? The Marchioness is impatient to embrace you; and

and I hope, Mademoiselle, you will perceive that there is infinitely more propriety in placing yourself beneath our protection for some time, than in residing in your own splendid but lonely chateau. Say, shall we have the felicity of finding in our beloved niece the affectionate tenderness of a daughter?"

Adelaide was too sensible of the justness of the Marquis's advice, not to instantly acquiesce in his wishes; and she derived no small degree of self-approbation from her immediate assent, in perceiving that her uncle appeared to be unfeignedly pleased with her compliance.

She now mentioned having invited Miss Vernor to pass some time with her; and the Marquis immediately hastened to give a polite invitation to Henrietta, and to communicate the recent determination of Adelaide to the Count St. Croix, who, while he silently assented to the propriety of her residing at the castle of the Marquis, and reflected that he could much more

more frequently see her there than at the Chateau de Cressy, felt an involuntary and undefinable tremor agitate his mind; and during supper he gazed on Adelaide with a feeling of inquietude, which, although devoid of the wild anguish which he had suffered for her at Lisbon, was scarcely less painful. In the first instance, he had fancied he knew the extent of her danger, but now he was compelled to endure the most tormenting presentiments of evil, without perceiving the least foundation for his alarms.

On the day following the whole party set out for Dauphiny.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

DURING the journey, the Marquis most assiduously endeavoured to dissipate the sorrow, and obtain the gratitude of his lovely niece; and if he failed in his efforts to render her less melancholy, he effectually succeeded in impressing her with the most affectionate and grateful sentiments; nor could St. Croix avoid mentally acknowledging, that the manners of the Marquis were well calculated to excite a most favourable opinion.

The lively Henrietta was no less charmed with the sentiments, and polite insinuating address of the Marquis, and only dreaded that

that the war then meditating between England and France would banish her from so agreeable a party. The liberal opinions of the Marquis St. Viviers, who avowed himself a citizen of the world, and equally attached to the virtuous and amiable of all nations, however, soon left Henrietta free from fear that national prejudices, or party spirit, might occasion her speedy return to England; nor were the Marquis's religious principles apparently less rational, as he scrupled not to intimate, that he believed that the just in all the Christian denominations were equally certain of Heaven.

Henrietta, although nobly born, was yet neither rich nor independent; her brother and herself had been left orphans at an early age, and consigned by the will of their father to the protection and guardianship of an uncle, who imagined he had fulfilled every duty, when he had placed Charles Vernor in the navy, and bestowed a fashionable education and a small portion on

on Henrietta, who, at the age of sixteen, had accompanied a distant relative to Lisbon. Lady Dormer was a Catholic, and a bigot in every sense of the word; of course she imagined, that the greatest possible service she could render the young Henrietta, was to place her in a convent, where she might be induced to take the veil; and in this retreat Miss Vernor had been confined some years, although she had resolutely resisted both the entreaties and severity employed to force her to change her religion, and renounce the world.

The sudden death of Lady Dormer, however, once more gave liberty to Henrietta; and she was on the point of leaving Lisbon with her brother, who had some time previously been made acquainted with his sister's situation, when the awful calamity of the earthquake introduced her to the friendship of Adelaide St. Viviers.

Not having any friends or relations, to whom she was dear, in her native land, and having

having listened through life only to the harsh reproof of supercilious pride, no wonder that Henrietta's warm and artless heart conceived for the amiable and accomplished Adelaide the most fervent friendship and admiration; nor that she trembled at the idea of a separation from the only being who professed and evinced a regard for her.

The slowness with which the Marquis, in regard to his niece's health, travelled, would have rendered the journey highly salutary to the fair object of his cares, had not the alarming accounts of several slight shocks of the earthquake having been felt in various parts of France, recalled in all its force the terrors of the scene in which she had lost her father.

On the last day of the journey, the chearfulness of the Marquis St. Viviers appeared to desert him, and was succeeded by a degree of gravity, which effected a striking change in his whole appearance; and the evening had closed in when they reached the

the Castle of St. Viviers, an ancient but formerly strong fortress, situated at the foot of the Alps, which divide Dauphiny from Savoy.

The darkness of a heavy December night prevented all exterior view of the building; and the interior of the large gothic hall, into which the whole party were conducted on alighting, was not calculated to chear the spirits after the fatigue of a long journey.

The awe with which the ancient domestics, who attended at the gates to assist their lord and his friends, regarded him, was not noticed by Adelaide, but the Count St. Croix began to entertain an immediate suspicion, that the Marquis was neither beloved nor respected by his household, and consequently could not possess in his private life those amiable manners and just principles, which he had so ostentatiously displayed on their journey.

Henrietta was too much [illegible] occupied by her friend to pay much attention to the surrounding

surrounding objects. The Marquis, also attentive to Adelaide, noticed not his domestics; but, taking the hand of his lovely niece, conducted her and his guests into a large handsome parlour, where a blazing wood fire, preparations for an elegant supper, and plenty of light, diffused around an air of comfort and hospitality.

At the upper end of this room, seated on an old-fashioned gilded sofa, appeared a lady much advanced in years, towards whom the Marquis hastily led Adelaide, saying—

"Receive, my dear Marchioness, our lovely niece; and may you, Mademoiselle St. Viviers, experience for the lady to whom you are now introduced, all those sentiments of affection which her tenderness towards you will, I hope, inspire."

The ancient lady could not rise; but she took the hand of Adelaide with a look of infinite good-nature, and, seating the lovely girl beside her, still retained her hand, while she received the compliments of St. Croix

and

and Miss Vernor, whose amazement was extreme, on finding, in the wife of the handsome and accomplished Marquis St. Viviers, a woman, who appeared to be full seventy, who never could have been handsome, and who was evidently labouring under the greatest infirmities. There was, however, something so benevolent and open in her countenance, and such a chearful urbanity in her manner, that very few moments were passed in her society, without losing all recollection of her age and appearance, in respect for her amiable disposition.

After returning the compliments of the Count St. Croix and Miss Vernor with good-humoured politeness, she pressed the hand of Adelaide, and said—"And now, my dear child, I will not say how much rejoiced I am to behold you, but will endeavour to evince by my actions what an impression you have made upon my mind."

There was something so maternal in the manner of the Marchioness while she spoke, that

that Adelaide could not restrain her tears. "Nay," continued the old lady, smiling, "if my first professions of loving you cause you to weep, what am I to expect hereafter? Come, come, Mademoiselle, I do not suffer sorrow to appear in my presence to-night; compose yourself, and try to recover the fatigues of this harrassing journey, and then who knows but in a few days you may find the whimsical old woman disposed to listen to a tale of grief, and sympathize in all your feelings."

Thus did the good Marquise endeavour to banish all unpleasing retrospection of the past; while Adelaide, grateful for the genuine motive of her kindness, assumed, if not a chearful, at least a composed air, and returned the attention of her venerable new friend, with all those little endearing tokens of respect and affection, which so often renders filial love so interesting.

St. Croix, who every moment felt his veneration and esteem for the Marchioness increase, was by no means deficient in his attentions

attentions to her, which she accepted with all that easy good-nature which evinces real friendship; while to Miss Vernor she behaved with the utmost politeness, not unmixed, however, with a small degree of ceremonious reserve. But Henrietta, who did not expect any other conduct from a perfect stranger, felt no peculiar uneasiness at the circumstance, and received, in the sisterly attention of Adelaide, more than an equivalent for the slight coldness of the Marchioness.

The manners of the Marquis were, during the time of supper, tinctured with extreme gravity; though equally polite and attentive to all his guests, yet the chief object of his notice appeared to be his wife, to whom he behaved with an expression of respect and tenderness, which raised him highly in the opinion of those present, and effectually banished all the fears of St. Croix; and when the hour of separating for the night arrived, each retired impressed with the most favourable sentiments of the other.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

THE housekeeper, an ancient woman of most respectable appearance, conducted the young ladies to their apartments, which neither Adelaide nor Henrietta were pleased to find separated from each other by a long gallery, and in a part of the castle which had not been for some time inhabited; the rooms, however, were splendidly furnished, though in a very ancient style; and the housekeeper with truth averred, that these apartments were not only the best in the castle, except those of her lord and lady, but had also the most agreeable prospects, for which reasons they had been selected

selected as most pleasant for the young ladies.

The favourite waiting-woman of the Marchioness, who had by her lady's command attended Adelaide to her apartment, now offered to remain with her during the night—a proposal which was immediately rejected.

Henrietta had before made the same offer; for she perceived that Adelaide had, on entering the apartment allotted to her, turned unusually pale, and hesitated at the door. When the Marchioness's woman proposed passing the night in the room, Henrietta repeated her own offer, and, on its being also rejected, intimated a wish that Adelaide would suffer her to occupy that apartment, and retire herself to that prepared for her; but this was immediately opposed by Adelaide, who now assured her friend and the attendants, that the momentary gloom, which had impressed her mind on her first entering the chamber, had entirely vanished; and then, with

assumed chearfulness, wishing Henrietta a good night, the friends separated, Henrietta retiring to her room, attended by a young woman, who had been hired at Rochefort as an attendant for Adelaide and herself.

Henrietta had no sooner sat down to undress than her young Rochefort attendant exclaimed—

"Ah, Mademoiselle, this will be the last time that I shall ever have the happiness of assisting you, or of attending on my dear, good young lady, with whom I hoped to have lived all my life."

"Why so, Nannette?" asked Henrietta, in surprise.

"Why, Mademoiselle, because there never must be such a thing as a young woman in this castle. Didn't you perceive, Mademoiselle, that all the servants are very old? Why, there is not a young woman to be seen for two leagues round the castle and its hall, owing to my Lord Marquis, who thinks the best compliment he

he can pay to his lady is never to keep a young female servant, nor suffer any of his tenants' daughters to live near him; and this is the way he keeps the old lady, his wife, in such good humour, for she fancies him quite a saint; and as she has a sight of riches, she thinks she may as well leave them to so excellent a husband as to the priests, whom she says have not half the holiness and virtue of her lord. Why, do you know, Mademoiselle, that—I hope you wont be offended—but the servants said, they would forfeit their lives if you would stay here a fortnight."

This unpleasing information immediately explained to Henrietta the cause of the Marchioness's reserve towards herself, and she deeply regretted, that a woman, who was apparently possessed of good sense and generous feelings, could be the dupe of so ridiculous an error, as to suppose that the banishing all youthful female domestics and visitants could restrain the inclinations of her lord, were he indeed disposed to wander. Indeed this account of

the evidently affected austerity of the Marquis inspired Henrietta with suspicions by no means to his advantage; and she could scarcely hesitate to believe, that so singular a display of rigid purity betrayed to a discerning mind certain indication of concealed depravity.

Henrietta possessed quick and accurate penetration; how far her present suspicions were just, will be known hereafter. Scarcely had these reflections passed in her mind, when the door of her room was opened, and the Marchioness's woman entered, and informed Henrietta, that her lady, fearful that either of the young ladies might wish her attendance during the night, had ordered her to sleep with Nannette, for whose use a large closet within the apartment of Miss Vernor had been prepared.

Henrietta, now fully convinced of the truth of what her attendant had related, instantly assented, and the night was passed without any cause of alarm.

CHAP. VIII.

AT an early hour in the morning the Marchioness's woman retired; and Henrietta, as soon as she herself arose, went to the apartment of Adelaide, whom she found already risen, and preparing to attend the Marchioness to breakfast in her own apartments, a large suit of rooms in the western wing of the castle.

The young friends accordingly proceeded thither together, attended by her woman, who ushered them into a large gothic room, where sat the Marchioness and her woman, busily employed in embroidering a set of velvet hangings.

With the same good-humoured smile

which had distinguished her on the preceding night, she received Adelaide, while her compliments to Henrietta were, to the satisfaction of the latter, infinitely more cordial and friendly than heretofore.

Two of the Marchioness's women now approached her, and with some difficulty assisted the lady into an adjoining apartment, richly furnished, and decorated with tapestry hangings, representing the feats of Godfrey of Boulogne.

Adelaide and Henrietta followed, and partook of an elegant breakfast, to which, in compliment to Henrietta, tea was added. When it was concluded, the Marchioness said—

"The Marquis, my dear Adelaide, wishes to converse with you in private; Miss Vernor will continue with me. My woman shall conduct you to the apartment where your uncle waits."

Adelaide immediately followed the attendant; and in passing through the great hall she met St. Croix, who flew towards her

her with all the tender eagerness of love, and was received with that smile, which in Adelaide so well expressed all of modest affection and confidence.

The waiting-woman paused when Adelaide stopped to speak to the Count, who, after the first salutation, said, in a low whisper—"I conjure you, my Adelaide, to grant me a private interview as soon as possible. I wish to communicate to you some circumstances most important for you to know."

There was so much embarrassment and anxiety in the looks of St. Croix, that Adelaide, alarmed and surprised, could not find power to reply, ere the Marquis, who, at the commencement of St. Croix's request, had appeared at the opposite side of the hall, joined them, and, by immediately leading Adelaide away, prevented her informing her lover that she would see him as he had desired.

On entering the library, into which the Marquis led her, she appeared so confused

and distressed, that the Marquis immediately said—"The Count St. Croix must have conducted himself with extreme imprudence, to occasion you so much emotion, my lovely niece."

Adelaide, unwilling to confess how much she was alarmed at the manner of her lover, replied evasively, and then requested to know the wishes of the Marquis, who was silent for a moment, and regarded her with a look of smiling penetration; but, on perceiving how greatly his glance had increased her confusion, he said—"I am rather surprised that Mademoiselle St. Viviers should so soon deem it necessary to have any reserves with so near a relation as I am; however, we will speak no more on this unpleasant subject; at a future period I trust you will not deny me your confidence. My motive for requesting this interview, is to learn some particulars relative to my brother. I am grieved that I am compelled by circumstances to enter thus early on the

the subject of your sorrow; but when I inform you, charming Adelaide, that the memory of a parent you so justly revere may be injured by a longer silence, I hope you will perceive that I could not avoid requesting the explanation I seek. There is still a mystery relative to the sudden return of the Count St. Viviers, which all the world is astonished at, but unable to penetrate. It is now above seventeen years since he quitted his native home; from that period he was never heard of, notwithstanding the most strenuous endeavours to discover his retreat. Four months since it was announced in the Paris papers, that the long-lost Count St. Viviers had suddenly re-appeared, and had emerged from the most impenetrable obscurity into a state of the utmost splendour at Lisbon. This singular paragraph concluded with an assertion, that it was more than suspected that the Count had amassed his wealth in the West Indies, where he had married the widow of a merchant, whose uncle dying

immensely rich, had enlarged the possessions of his niece with all his property.

"In less than three days after reading this strange account, I received a letter from my brother. I now found, that the report of his being in Portugal was a fact; but his letter afforded me no information relative to where he had so long concealed himself. He wrote, indeed, in the most affectionate style; mentioned his having an intention of speedily returning to France; and enclosed me bills to a large amount, to be appropriated to new furnishing the Chateau de Cressy, an estate belonging to himself, the arrears of which I had long held, but which my brother generously assured me he should never claim. His epistle concluded with his informing me, that on his return he should introduce to me a lovely and amiable niece, and a young nobleman, who would soon be his son-in-law. The encomiums which followed on the character and virtues of the Count St. Croix, were infinitely pleasing

to

to me, as the interest I took in my brother's happiness led me to rejoice in the prospect he entertained of so much felicity. Thus far I am apprised of my brother's late situation and intentions; but I have still much to learn, and from you, my dear niece, I can only hope for an elucidation of all that still appears mysterious respecting him. When, therefore, you find yourself sufficiently composed to enter into the detail I am so anxious to hear, I must request you will oblige me."

The very long speech of the Marquis had enabled Adelaide to recover in some degree from the agitation and grief which the first mention of her lamented father had occasioned her; and she now replied —"I have expected this just request, my Lord, and have prepared myself for entering on the explanation you desire; but allow me to say, that there are many circumstances of my father's life with which I am totally unacquainted. Such particu-

lars as have come to my knowledge I think it my duty to reveal to you."

Adelaide, now deeply affected, paused; and the Marquis, with much emotion, entreated her not to continue a conversation which so evidently distressed her.

Adelaide raised her tearful eyes to the face of her uncle; he was bending over her with a look of so much pity and affection—a look which she imagined so exactly resembled that of her father, that she could no longer restrain the tears of enanguished grief.

Again the Marquis, with impassioned earnestness, besought her to wait till time had enabled her to gain that serenity so essential to the painful task she had undertaken.

"No, Marquis," replied the amiable girl, "I will not, to indulge these natural, but harrowing feelings, shrink from the performance of that duty which I owe to the memory of the best of parents." Again she

she paused, but at length continued—"That some sudden and mysterious event caused my father to make a precipitate and secret flight from his paternal home, I have often had reason to suspect, from many of his expressions; to the nature of that event I am, however, still a stranger, and —."

"The event to which your words allude, Mademoiselle," said the Marquis, hastily interrupting Adelaide, "was the discovery of your father's private marriage with the orphan daughter of the Marquis de Beauregard, a nobleman who had been particularly disliked by my father; and this discovery was made at the period of my brother's rejecting the offered hand of the present Marchioness St. Viviers; and, indeed, Louis's behaviour on this occasion was such as could not fail of deeply afflicting our parent. He had been absent avowedly on his travels into Italy, but secretly residing near the castle of his lady, who I have since heard, being at that time under

some family disagreement with an only relative, chose to conceal for a time her marriage with your father. Am I correct?"

"Perfectly, I believe, my Lord," replied Adelaide; "I have heard my mother mention the circumstance. Her maternal uncle, Don Alvarez de Suza, a native of Portugal, was the relative to whom she feared to disclose a marriage so hastily concluded without his consent; but in this instance her fears deceived her; and when at length she assumed courage to write him a confession of the affair, he returned her an answer expressive of his approbation of the match, as it was pleasing to her, and requested only to see her husband ere he quitted Portugal, he being on the eve of embarking for Rio Janeiro, where he has ever since resided; and I believe my father gratified his wish, by taking a journey into Portugal, to see this beloved and affectionate friend. Indeed, if I err not, I should imagine it was at this period, when my father

father was supposed to be on his travels in Italy, that he visited Portugal."

"Most probable," observed the Marquis, "for it was soon after his pretended return from Italy that your father so suddenly and so clandestinely left his home—a step which broke the heart of the Marquis, who died in less than two months after his departure. But wherefore did my brother veil his retreat in so much mystery?"

"Alas! I know not," replied Adelaide, deeply sighing; "nor for sixteen years did I imagine that I had claims to any other name than that of Arrancy, the assumed name of my parents, who thought proper, on my father's abruptly quitting his home, to sell off their possessions in Franche Compte, and retire to a small chateau near Bayonne, in Gascony. Here, in elegant retirement, amid the society of virtuous friends, years glided rapidly on, and I knew no sorrow till at the age of twelve I lost my mother.

"The grief of my dear father was extreme, but

but for my sake he struggled with his feelings. The sad loss which I had sustained was, however, alleviated by the maternal kindness of the Countess St. Croix, the mother of the present Count, who removed me to her castle, near Dax, and there I compleated my education. This lady had been for years attached to my mother—the union of myself and her son had been long projected, and would have taken place on the day that I attained my sixteenth year, had not death again interfered in the happiness of my father, by depriving us of the inestimable Countess. But I dare not dwell on the recollection of the sorrow which the death of this dear friend occasioned us. Soon after this melancholy event, Don Alvarez de Suza, my mother's kind uncle, wrote to inform my father that he intended to quit Brazil, and requested that we would immediately set out for Lisbon, where he intended to meet us in a few months, and there celebrate the marriage of myself and the Count St. Croix,

Croix, assuring my father that he had adopted me as heiress of all his wealth.

"Don Alvarez had already bestowed upon us such splendid proofs of his affection, that my father could not hesitate to assent to this wish. We set off for Lisbon, accompanied by the Count St. Croix.

"On our arrival we were received by Don Sebastino de Selvas, an intimate friend of Don Alvarez, with every demonstration of respect; and soon after received from Brazil the most magnificent testimonies of Don Alvarez's anxiety, that we should assume the state which our rank and wealth warranted.

"As the motive of my father's secrecy respecting himself seemingly no longer existed, he now publicly avowed his real title and family; and inspired with the most ardent desire of again beholding his beloved brother and his native province, he wrote to you, my Lord."

Adelaide now, with faltering tongue, and violent emotion, related the singular visit

visit of Magdalena, and her horrible attempt on the life of the Count, her father.

To this part of her narrative the Marquis listened with every mark of the deepest attention and horror. Pale and breathless he sat with his eyes fixed upon Adelaide, who, unconscious of his situation, proceeded.

"I was present when my dear father fervently enjoined the Count St. Croix to effect the liberation of the guilty sister of Miserecordia. She was set free. Oh! dreadful and mistaken clemency! In a few hours after the tremendous calamity which has ruined Lisbon commenced, I was sitting beside the bed on which my father lay—one of my hands was clasped in his—St. Croix was absent—I felt the building rock—the fate of my father rushed on my mind—my senses fled.

"On recovering I found myself in a spacious subterranean; beside me stood a ruffian-looking figure, who fiercely grasped my

my arm, while at a small distance lay the —oh, horror! the body of my father; he was disfigured with blood, and exulting o'er his corpse stood the fiend-like Nun of Miserecordia, and three men, whose savage looks and gleaming weapons seemed to mark them as the blood-stained murderers! Ah! terrible recollection! I again lost all consciousness of the horrors of my state in insensibility."

Adelaide sunk back fainting, while the Marquis, almost equally overpowered by his own feelings, had scarcely power to use any means to recover her; and when, at length, she was restored to animation, he demanded, with an eagerness which humanity condemned, what had become of the nun, and the body of the Count?

"Alas!" replied the afflicted Adelaide, "the first objects I beheld on re-opening my eyes, were the ruffians conveying the remains of my father from the vault. The dreadful nun, in a voice of malice, bade me take a last view of that dear form, which,

which, she said, would instantly be thrown into the sea, or amid the groups of dead scattered in the ruins of the city.

"My despair gave me courage to demand how she had dared to stain the sacred garb of holy charity she wore, with the blood of the innocent?

'Innocent!' exclaimed this monster of cruelty—'Innocent!—the wrongs of Elvira would justify a thousand deeds like these."

The Marquis uttered a deep groan, and a convulsive shivering agitated his frame; yet he suffered not Adelaide to pause, but wildly demanded whether the nun had survived the effects of the earthquake?

"No," faintly replied Adelaide; "for some hours she remained with me in the vault, and whenever approaching steps were heard, held the poniard, stained with my father's blood, to my bosom. But, oh! I cannot describe those dreadful hours—death would have then been welcomed by me; but it pleased an all-wise Providence

Providence to preserve me, by directing my St. Croix and the English officer to the spot where I was confined; and the moment of my liberation was that of Elvira's death."

"And she is dead!—Your father's murderer is dead!" exclaimed the Marquis, with a look which seemed to express all of anxious hope, fear, and joy.

"She is," said Adelaide.

"But wherefore did this malicious fiend attack your father, my amiable niece? Certainly he has explained this affair to you?" asked the Marquis.

"Alas, no," faintly replied Adelaide; but she retained not power to continue the conversation; and the Marquis perceiving her again sinking lifeless on the sofa, instantly rung for attendance, and the hapless girl was conveyed senseless to her chamber.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

FOR two days Adelaide was confined to her room by severe indisposition, during which period the amiable Henrietta never quitted her.

St. Croix appeared scarcely more afflicted by her situation than did the Marquis, while the good Marchioness omitted not to order every thing which she fancied would contribute to the recovery of her beloved niece, and even permitted that Nannette should remain for a short time in the castle.

Meanwhile the Marquis behaved to St. Croix with the most marked attention, and received

received from him a detail of the particulars relative to his rescuing Adelaide from the perilous state in which she was involved in the vault at Lisbon.

The Marquis was also particular in enquiring whether his brother had related to the Count the nature of his connection with the mysterious Nun of Miserecordia?

To this latter question St. Croix replied in the negative; and from that moment the Marquis never mentioned the subject. From St. Croix he learned that Don Alvarez de Suza had not arrived at Lisbon at the time of the earthquake; and dispatches were accordingly sent off both to Portugal and Brazil, to inform Don Alvarez of the death of the Count St. Viviers, and the present situation of the lovers.

On the morning of the third day, Adelaide was sufficiently recovered to be able to leave her apartment. On entering those of the Marchioness, she found there both the Marquis and St. Croix. All the tender griefs of love were portrayed on the expressive

expressive features of St. Croix as he addressed her, while the Marquis appeared to feel all the paternal solicitude which his words expressed.

The Marchioness, who seemed to be truly rejoiced at the re-appearance of her niece, was lavish in her thanks to Henrietta, to whose attentions she justly attributed the speedy recovery of Adelaide; and when the morning repast concluded, the gentlemen withdrew, but not ere St. Croix had contrived to obtain an intimation from Adelaide, that she would see him privately the first opportunity. That he should think it necessary to make such a request with an appearance of secrecy, was not the least cause of surprise to Mademoiselle St. Viviers; but confident that her beloved Henry would not act thus but from the most just motives, she forbore all conjectures on the subject.

When the servants had withdrawn, the Marchioness placed Adelaide and Henrietta on each side of her on the sofa, and, with

with a very serious look, commenced a long strain of encomiums on the wondrous virtues of her lord, whom she painted as the most perfect of human beings.

"We have been married near sixteen years," continued the old lady; "and in such a length of time, had the Marquis possessed any evil dispositions, I must have discovered them. I was to have been married to your father, Mademoiselle Adelaide, but he chose to take flight, without once honouring me with a visit, to return me thanks for my kindness.

"You may think it singular, that an old woman like me, loaded with infirmities, which have for thirty years confined me to my rooms, or the garden, should think of marrying a young man. But do not imagine that vanity led me to take such a step. The family of St. Viviers was very poor—I was very rich; the old Marquis was one of my dearest friends, and as I could not bestow my property on himself or his family without a legal pretence, I

proposed myself as a bride for one of his sons. My offer was joyfully accepted: Louis was my destined husband; he loved liberty better than gold, and I lost my young lover, who, to say the truth, I at that time liked much better than his brother. However Eustace soon consoled me for the slight I had received; he was really affected by, and grateful for my good wishes to his family, and voluntarily offered to fulfil himself the broken engagements of his brother, who, however, it was whispered, had been privately married.

"I had heard some reports which attached a character of sly gallantry to the present Marquis; and as I did not choose that my property should be squandered in such cases, I at first rejected the suit of Eustace, and gave my reasons for so doing. Ah! I was soon ashamed of my suspicions; the amiable young man produced positive proofs that he had been vilely slandered, and solemnly assured me that he had never felt the least tenderness for

for any woman, till my generous and noble wish, as he termed it, of enriching his family, had inspired him with the most fervent admiration and respect for me. His looks, his manner," continued the Marchioness, drawing herself up with the serious air of self-complacency, "convinced me of his sincerity; yes, I was truly convinced that Eustace was a stranger to the rhodomontade flights of libertine passions; and that, in giving my hand to him, I should reward the most exalted purity. And I was right. For sixteen years I have not had cause for one single complaint; nor can I tax my lord with one failing, unless it be the amiable one of being too liberal to the poor. Indeed it is incredible what sums he lavishes indiscriminately on all the distressed, whether good or bad. However, you may judge for yourself in time, when you are acquainted with all his virtues.—But to proceed to the point which concerns you. As every tender sentiment of the Marquis is

reserved for me alone, he has ever been desirous of giving me all the proofs in his power that I alone am the object of all his love; and amongst these proofs is the singular custom he has from the time of his marriage invariably observed—that of never suffering any young female to reside in the castle, or within two leagues of it. Now, Mademoiselle Adelaide, unavoidable circumstances have introduced Mademoiselle Vernor into the castle. This is against our rule; but the tender affection and kindness of Mademoiselle to you demands every return in our power. Her visit was specified to continue a month; but provided you will have the goodness to conform a little to our whimsical customs," she continued, addressing Henrietta, "your stay, Mademoiselle, shall only be limited by your own pleasure."

"Oh, Madam!" exclaimed the delighted Henrietta, "to what will I not submit, to continue near my beloved friend."

"Well then," said the Marchioness, while

while a smile of good-nature illumed her face, "we shall, I hope, soon agree. But observe, Adelaide, your young Rochefort maid must go immediately; I have provided a steady elderly woman to supply her place. And now, Mademoiselle Henrietta, this is what I require of you:—Will you sleep in an apartment which opens into the dormitory of my women, and, while the Marquis remains in the castle, pass some hours every day in the embroidery room?"

The smile which hovered on the lips of the lively Henrietta could scarcely be repressed, as she replied with assumed gravity in the affirmative.

"You are an excellent young woman, Mademoiselle," said the Marquise, very much pleased with the ready acquiescence in her wish; "and my niece is fortunate in finding a friend, whose noble birth has not inflated her mind with ridiculous pride and prejudices."

Henrietta, who well knew that her noble birth would not have compensated for her want of fortune in her own country, felt that she could not be humiliated by conforming to a whim, the singularity and long custom of which prevented all possibility of degradation, especially as she justly imagined that in all other respects she would be treated as became her rank. She therefore replied politely to the compliment of the Marquise, and repeated her resolve of submitting to any custom which might procure her the happiness of remaining with Adelaide, who, on her part, made her acknowledgements to her aunt, and promised to dismiss Nannette immediately.

"I will do that for you, my dear niece," said the Marchioness, "and I will take particular care that she shall be safely escorted to her own home. And now this is the hour that I usually take the air in the gardens. If you are not afraid that you are too weak to keep pace with my wheeled chair,

chair, you and Mademoiselle Henrietta can accompany me."

Adelaide, who felt the imprudence of yielding to unavailing grief, replied that she would venture: the Marchioness's favourite woman and another were now summoned, and assisted their lady to enter a handsome wheeled chair, which stood ready under a portico that shaded a pair of folding doors, that led from the room into a wide terrace of the gardens.

"Now," said the Marchioness, on being seated, "my dear niece, I always read a religious book while my women wheel me about; and, as I cannot alter my custom, you and Mademoiselle are at liberty to range whither you like; this garden is appropriated solely to my use, and therefore you need not fear meeting with any intruders."

Adelaide and her companion accepted this permission; and while her women wheeled the chair along the terrace, they descended a broad flight of marble steps,

and entered a walk shaded with laurels. This long vista was terminated by a mount, on which was erected a small temple dedicated to Wisdom. Thither the young friends directed their steps.

Henrietta, who having once conquered the natural reserve of her countrywomen, usually spoke with all that sincerity and ingenuous candour which is characteristic of her nation, could not forbear some observations on the singularities of the Marchioness.

"But she is really amiable," remarked Adelaide, in reply.

"True," said Henrietta, "she is good-tempered, compassionate, hospitable, just, and pious, and possesses so much good sense, that I am really astonished how she can entertain the idea that the Marquis can be in love with her person: that she does suppose so is certain; and it is equally certain that he takes infinite pains to convince her that she is right; yet the very means he employs are so preposterous,

rous, that were it not for that whimsical vanity which is so unaccountable in a woman like her, she might easily perceive that so much circumspection is not natural. Pardon me, my dear friend, for thus animadverting on the foible of your aunt; you have made it your particular request, that I should address you with the sincerity of friendship, and have thus made me regardless of those reserves which politeness must assume."

"Your observations coincide with my own ideas," returned Adelaide "Like you, I revere and admire the virtues of the Marchioness, and wonder at her credulity in imputing those attentions to love, which are certainly nothing more than delicate precautions, to save her from the influence of that jealousy to which the Marquis has undoubtedly observed her inclined. My uncle seems, indeed, to be worthy of all her esteem and affection, and has, I think, too much feeling, too much just pride, to treat with contempt or ne-

glect the woman whose fortune he did not disdain to accept."

"Oh, Adelaide!" exclaimed Henrietta, "you cause me to blush at the recollection of the suspicions I had harboured. How much does an early knowledge of the baseness of the generality of the world destroy that artless confidence in the virtues of those characters, to which the slightest appearance of ambiguity attaches! Forgive me, I will endeavour to atone for my fault, by avoiding all hasty decisions for the future."

"Dear Henrietta," said the lovely Adelaide, "can you suppose that I impute your mistake to malicious trifling or inconsiderate levity, that you should think it necessary to apologize? Oh no, appearances will even mislead the opinions of the most discerning; and I cannot condemn that candour which I have so earnesly solicited you to use."

She then mentioned the request of St. Croix to see her alone; and Henrietta's recent

recent self-disapprobation was in consequence of this communication vanished, by an instant renewal of all her unfavourable opinion of the Marquis. This turn of thought, however, she now carefully concealed from Adelaide, whom she advised by all means to see the Count as early as possible.

At this moment they reached the termination of the walk, and ascended by a winding path cut in the rocky mount to the temple.

"This is, indeed, the rugged road to wisdom," said Adelaide, pausing, ere they had ascended half way, "and I fear my feeble steps will never support me to the summit."

"Can she, who has already attained the highest eminence of innocence and virtue, despair of arriving at the abode of Wisdom?" said a voice, which the young friends instantly recognized to be that of the Marquis, who now appearing from behind a

clump of laurestinus, offered his assistance to both ladies.

Adelaide blushed at the extravagant compliment uttered by the Marquis, who, as they proceeded towards the temple, assumed all the elegant gaiety of manner which had distinguished him during their journey to the castle; and assiduously pointed out the several beauties of wild prospect and landscape which were perceptible from the mount; and, indeed, although the castle was situated in so sequestered a spot, yet the beautiful and magnificent scenery which surrounded it rendered it a residence peculiarly pleasing to the retired and contemplative mind.

"We are not a league distant from the Carthusian convent of Chartreuse," said the Marquis; "observe where those towering rocks and woods extend along that Alpine mountain; there, hid from the indulgence of human vanity, those austere and venerable men devote their lives to the

the service of Heaven. Hark! the wind conveys this way the distant roaring of the Guyer le Mort, that impetuous river, which precipitates its course amid the craggy rocks near the convent. How awful that retirement which secludes us from all the charms of society and nature!

"You, Mademoiselle," continued the Marquis, addressing Henrietta, "have had courage to resist the authority which would have compelled you to renounce a world so alluring to your youth. Alas! there are those, who, possessing only the tantalizing shadow of liberty, mourn in secret the wreck of every youthful hope, nor find one sympathising heart to partake their feelings or console their woes."

The Marquis concluded this speech in a tone so sad and desponding, that there could be little doubt but that he alluded to himself; but as they at that moment entered the temple, no reply was made.

Here, to the surprise of the ladies, they found

found a table set out with fruits, wine, and cakes.

"Wisdom is not so insensible to temporal enjoyments as I imagined," said Henrietta, laughing.

Scarcely had she spoke, when one of the Marchioness's attendants and the Count St. Croix entered.

"The Chevalier de Bionville is arrived, my Lord," said the attendant; "he is very urgent to see you, and my Lady has requested the Count St. Croix to attend the young ladies to the castle, when they please to return."

Dame Beatrix, after delivering her message, instantly withdrew; while the Marquis, evidently making an effort to suppress his chagrin, bowed coldly to the ladies and the Count, and departed.

"Oh, Adelaide," cried St. Croix, "how fortunately has this Chevalier arrived!"

Adelaide, overpowered by the fatigue of her walk, and the wild energy of her lover's

lover's manner, sunk on a seat; while he, severely condemning his own rashness, threw himself at her feet, to request pardon for his violence.

"You had better prevail on Mademoiselle St. Viviers to take some refreshment, Count," said the smiling Henrietta.

St. Croix instantly started up; and having succeeded in making Adelaide taste some fruit, he seated himself beside her; while Henrietta, who knew that he wished to speak in private, withdrew through a door opposite to that by which they had entered, and left the lovers alone.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

AFTER a short silence, during which St. Croix gazed on Adelaide with a look of anxiety and embarrassment, he said—

"The singularity of my so mysteriously requesting a private interview with you, my beloved Adelaide, my long betrothed bride, must have excited in your mind the utmost astonishment; how then can I add to the agitation you feel, by informing you of the circumstances which have compelled me to act thus?"

"Can any explanation affect me more than this suspense and fear, Henry?"

"True, my Adelaide," replied St. Croix, and yet ——. But it must be, for the happiness

piness of our lives may depend on the decision which you will now make.

"A mysterious billet, of horrible import, was, on the fourth night of our arrival here, slipped into my hand, as I passed through the eastern gallery to the chamber prepared for me. I beheld not the figure of the being who gave it me. The servant who preceded me with lights was unconscious of the circumstance. I was passing a recess, when I felt my arm suddenly grasped, and as suddenly loosed, while the billet was dropped into my hand. I had the prudence to proceed without causing any alarm, and the moment I was alone opened the billet. Judge of my horror and amazement on reading as follows.

"If the Count St. Croix values the happiness, the honour, nay the life of his Adelaide, he will lose no time in removing from St. Viviers Castle. In this horrible mansion lurks ruin and death. Murder stalks

stalks in midnight silence through its lonely towers, and hypocrisy and credulity veil the excesses of vice the most atrocious! Beware, St. Croix! Neglect not this awful warning!"

A pause of horror succeeded the reading of these dreadful lines; the faint life-blood fled from the cheek of Adelaide. St. Croix supported her sinking form in his encircling arms; but he was unable to speak, till Adelaide had more than once conjured him to say to whom he imagined the mysterious writer of the billet alluded, and what could be those dangers they were warned to avoid?

"These are questions, my Adelaide," he replied, "which cannot be answered with certainty. But although we have it not in our power to fully comprehend what we have to dread, it is yet possible to avoid these threatened evils. Refuse not, I beseech you, Adelaide, to immediately

ately give me a legal right to take you hence. I cannot remove you from the protection of your uncle but as my wife. Without explaining my reasons, I yesterday urged him most earnestly to consent to our speedy union; and such were my fears, and the exigencies of the case, that I ventured to say you would comply with my wishes. Alas! I received a positive and haughty refusal from your uncle, who scrupled not to say, that there was a possibility of our marriage never taking place.

"Confounded and dismayed, I had scarcely power to demand the reason of this strange and fearful supposition; and was informed in reply, that ere a decisive answer could be given, I must wait the return of a courier, who had been dispatched by the Marquis to the French envoy at Lisbon.

'I have thought it necessary,' said he, 'to commence the most strict enquiries as to the body of the Count St. Viviers, and the recovery of any of his effects. The

The disposition of my brother was always variable; he may have left some papers—some will, which may materially alter the situation in which his daughter now stands; and there is a possibility that some of his effects may be recovered from the ruins. We must wait the return of the courier, before we can talk further on this subject.'

"The Marquis then advised me, with an air of the most striking significance, to conceal from you our conversation, and left me almost stupified with dread and consternation. Thus, my beloved, are we now circumstanced; and can you hesitate to give me an immediate claim to protect you?'

"In such a trying dilemma, St. Croix, I will not, by any unseasonable delicacy, encounter the dreadful hazard of our separation," timidly replied Adelaide. "Our parents' blessings sanctified our affection; they saw us rise from childhood devoted to

to each other. Neither has ever harboured a wish which virtue might not avow; and surely if in this instance we deviate from that strict propriety which society demands, we shall not profane the memory of my lamented father by weeping his loss together."

St. Croix was about to reply in a strain of grateful rapture, when a shadow darkened the window near which they sat. He turned, but perceived no person; and imagining that the breeze had wafted the leafless branches of a lofty palm which grew before the window, proceeded to thank his Adelaide for her compliance with his ardent request of their being immediately united. It was then agreed between the lovers to acquaint Henrietta with the whole affair, and to beg her assistance in forming some plan to accomplish the marriage.

In a few moments they were joined by Miss Vernor.

Adelaide now arose, and softly whispering Henrietta that she had something to communicate

communicate to her, and begging she would, if possible, accompany her to her room, took the arm of St. Croix, and proceeded to the castle.

They had just reached the terrace, when they perceived the Marchioness led by her attendants into the saloon where they had breakfasted. She saw them at the same moment, and motioned them to approach.

Fortunately the extreme paleness of Adelaide struck her with terror; and she insisted that she should be immediately conducted to her chamber, whither she requested Henrietta to accompany her. The friends accordingly took their leave; St. Croix by the Marchioness's request remaining with her.

Anxious, however, as was Adelaide to communicate to her friend the singular and terrible secret which St. Croix had just communicated to her, and to consult on their future proceedings, yet she found it impossible to mention the subject during the day, as one or other of the Marchioness's

ness's ancient attendants was always in the apartment; their lady keeping them in constant employ, by sending a thousand little delicacies for the table of the young ladies.

As, during the late indisposition of Adelaide, Henrietta had slept in the same room, the Marchioness did not think proper to prohibit this indulgence while the illness of her niece continued; the friends, therefore, found themselves at perfect liberty to converse, when the family had retired for the night. One of the Marchioness's women slept in the anti-room; but she was soon buried in profound repose; and when all was quiet, Henrietta slipped out of bed, and, throwing on her robe, brought a lamp, which was kept constantly burning over the chimney-piece in the night, and placed it on a small table close to the bedside. By its quivering blaze she read the note which St. Croix had given to Adelaide.

Henrietta was not deficient in strength of

of mind, and had never yielded to the terrors of superstition, yet she felt a cold and sickly shivering creep over her frame as she read.

Adelaide leaned over her, and as their eye rested on the frightful expression of —" murder stalks in its lonely towers"— each perceived a blood-stained hand point to the horrible line, and pass quickly over the paper!

Adelaide uttered a faint shriek, and fell back; while Henrietta, inspired by a frantic courage, sprung from the bed, and seizing the lamp, rushed wildly round the apartment. No object met her eyes but the figures on the tapestry hangings and the massy gilded furniture.

Solemnly she pronounced the sacred name which is the refuge of the pious; and with more calmness continued her search, but found no farther cause of alarm, nor any outlet from the room, but the door leading into the anti-chamber; and the faint voice of Adelaide conjuring her

her to come to her, recalled Henrietta to the bedside.

"Call up Marcella instantly, my dear friend; I saw the figure of a man vanish, just at the spot where the tapestry represents Hubert of Dauphiny letting fall his infant son into the Isere."

Adelaide spoke with such difficulty—her respiration was so repressed, that Henrietta could scarcely comprehend her meaning; and not daring to leave her, she called loudly on Marcella, who soon appeared, looking the very image of dread and surprise, and exclaiming—

"Oh, Mademoiselle Adelaide! — Oh, Mademoiselle Henrietta! I'm sure you've seen it! Ah, *mon Dieu!* I thought this would be the case. Holy Saints guard us, what's that —?"

The affrighted Marcella was utterly incapable of giving the least assistance to either of the young ladies; and Henrietta, whose spirit was alone sustained by her anxiety for her beloved friend, was her-

self obliged to seek some drops to give to Adelaide.

With infinite difficulty Marcella was prevailed upon to bring some wax lights from the anti-chamber, which were now lit; and a glass of wine being given to the terrified waiting-woman, Henrietta retired to bed, while Marcella took her station in a large arm-chair by the bed-side, after obtaining a repeated promise from Miss Vernor that she would not sleep.

The amiable Henrietta was only anxious for her friend to obtain repose. The drops she had swallowed were of a soporific nature; but though they in some degree lulled her senses, they did not produce sleep, which, indeed, Marcella took effectual care to banish, by offering to relate the history of the event which had caused the apartment to be haunted, for haunted she vowed it was.

Henrietta, dreading the effect which some tale of horror might produce on the weak nerves of Adelaide, opposed this; but

but the latter most earnestly requested that the servant might give her relation; and Marcella soon accounted for her own courage in telling such a tale, by solemnly declaring, that the spirit never appeared but on the annual day of its departure from the world, and could not therefore terrify them any more. She then began—

"It is now nineteen years, young ladies, since a chevalier and a lady, being benighted in the mountains, begged admittance into the castle for a night. My late Lord Marquis, who was then alive, was very courteous and hospitable, although he was so proud. Ay, those were happy times! Both my young lords were at home then, and my lady was alive. Well, the chevalier, his lady, and two servants, were admitted, and entertained as they should be by a generous nobleman. This room was prepared for them, and here they slept. The next day, the Marquis was so pleased with their company that he would not let them depart; and the

lady not being very well, the chevalier, her husband, consented to stay here for a short time. Their names were Durancy—the Chevalier Durancy, and his lady was the most beautiful creature, except Mademoiselle Adelaide, that ever I beheld; her skin was like the driven snow, and her eyes were as bright as the stars on a fine night; and she was as sweet tempered as she was beautiful. Now, if ever my Lord Eustace, the present Marquis, loved a woman to distraction, it was this charming Madame Durancy. All the servants took notice how deeply he seemed in love. The old Marquis, however, never once suspected it; and as Monsieur Durancy was always out with Lord Louis, either hunting or fishing, for they staid here a month, the young Marquis had plenty of opportunities of paying his attentions to the lady; but she was so virtuous that she rejected all his fine vows with scorn, and threatened to tell my Lord, his father, and her husband, if he did not desist. The young

young Marquis told her that he knew she loved her contemptible husband too well to endanger his life. I heard him myself, but that's a great secret, for I happened to be in the next room when he was talking this way to the lady, who, I believe, tried all she could to persuade her husband to leave the castle; but as she, poor thing, did not dare to tell her reason for wanting him to go, he would stay. About a week after this, the household were alarmed in the middle of the night with dreadful cries of robbers and fire.

"It was my Lord Eustace, who, having discovered that robbers had got into the castle, raised such an outcry. Two of the banditti were taken; but they escaped the very same night, and were never afterwards discovered.

"Some of the servants, and me amongst the rest, run to the room of Monsieur Durancy, where, Lord help us! we found the poor Chevalier stretched on the floor in his hunting dress, and all covered with

blood, while his beautiful lady was screaming in strong convulsions on her bed.

"And now there was such confusion to find out how this had happened; but the Chevalier was quite dead, and his lady almost so, so no account could be had from either of them; and, indeed, she did not outlive him two hours. So now it was supposed that robbers had stolen into the castle, and that after abusing the poor lady they had killed her husband, who had been out with the young Lord Louis on a hunting party; and as he always had a key of a little postern gate, it was thought that he had come in privately as usual, and, on reaching his lady's apartments, had discovered the men, who had fallen upon him and killed him, that they might escape the easier.

"So now there was great grief in the castle; and they were both buried in the chapel of the castle, and have a stately monument over them.

"My young Lord Marquis never he[illegible] up his

his head for three months after this; but though every pains were taken to discover the villains, who had escaped, they never could be found out, and so the poor Chevalier and his lady remain unrevenged to this day; and ever since the ghost of the Chevalier often haunts the castle."

This dreadful tale filled the minds of Adelaide and Henrietta with the most terrific suspicions. Neither dared to make a single comment or remark on what they had heard, but both experienced the same terrors, and involuntary surmises.

In this state of painful horror the night was passed; happily no new cause of alarm occurred, and as the morning sun dawned o'er the eastern summits of the mountains, Henrietta arose; but Adelaide, whose spirits were totally wearied, sunk into a heavy slumber.

CHAP. XI.

THE clock of the castle had only just struck eight, when Henrietta, to her infinite surprise, was summoned to an interview with the Marquis.

She found him at breakfast in his study. He was pale even to ghastliness, and his features were contracted by an expression of sternness and horror. Leading Miss Vernor to a seat, he requested her to take a cup of coffee with him, and said, with a melancholy smile—

"You are doubtless much surprised, Mademoiselle, at my seeking an interview with so young and lovely a lady as yourself;

self; but you will do me the justice not to impute my conduct to any motives but those which suit the purity of your own mind. To be brief, Mademoiselle Vernor —I have ever heard that ladies of your nation are famous for their ingenuousness, fortitude, and courage. In your looks I read that you have passed an unpleasant night. Answer me with sincerity:—Have you last night seen ought in the apartment of my niece which has caused you any alarm?"

While the Marquis spoke he gazed on Henrietta with so wild and afflicted an air, that she was too much affected by his manner to be immediately capable of replying. At length she informed him, that she had been reading to Mademoiselle St. Viviers at a late hour after they had retired to bed, and had been suddenly startled by the terrific sight of a bloody hand passing swifty over the lines she was reading. She then described the terror of Adelaide, and mentioned the assertion that

the latter had made, of having seen the figure of a man disappear at a particular part of the tapestry.

The Marquis listened in silent attention till she ceased, after which he said—

"There is a tale connected with that room, Mademoiselle, of which you may probably, from the garrulity of servants, have heard some particulars."

Henrietta acknowledged that she had heard something of the sad event to which he alluded.

The Marquis, with a look of extreme anxiety, begged her to relate what she had heard.

Henrietta obeyed, suppressing, however, any knowledge of his having had a passion for Madame Durancy.

The Marquis, after a short pause, now said—"The relation you have received, Mademoiselle, is not correct. They were not robbers who deprived Durancy of life. It was soon after discovered that one was a favourite gallant of Madame's, and the

the other his servant. Aware of Durancy's long and repeated absences, this lover obtained private interviews with the lady, whose beauty was indeed sufficient to charm the coldest mind. I acknowledge that I had no power to withstand her uncommon fascinations; happily, however, I concealed my sentiments. I have therefore nothing to reproach myself with; nor does the shade of Durancy call for vengeance on me as the author of his death. That some supernatural being wanders in their chambers, is now most reluctantly believed beyond all doubt. Hitherto I have treated this idea with indifference and incredulity; but as I slept last night my curtains were undrawn, and I was awakened to behold the pale form of Durancy stand at my feet. Yet this I should have treated as the fevered dream of disease, had not one of the Marchioness's women early informed me of the terror you and my niece had suffered in the night. I then recollected that last night was the anniversary of the

dreadful murder, and your account compels me most reluctantly to give credit to the awful possibility of beholding the departed spirits of the dead. The next annual return of that sad day I mean, if I am alive, to pass in that chamber, for what would I not encounter to appease its horrible visitant! And now, Mademoiselle, to you I may confess, that the deep effect which the discovery of the dishonour and the death of the Durancys produced upon my mind, and the reflection of the danger I had myself nearly incurred by a blameable passion for that lovely lady, determined me to vow never to live in the society of any young or beautiful female, unless I was so fortunate as to call such an one by the sacred name of wife. Family reasons united me to the present Marchioness. I have learnt to be resigned to my lot; and if fate has denied me the felicity of being united to one whose youth and beauty might have enchanted my senses, I have at least the satisfaction of never having

ing forfeited my honour, by forming connections inconsistent with the respect I owe the Marchioness. I am thus elaborate, my dear Mademoiselle, that by accounting for my singularities I may escape the unavoidable ridicule which such a system, in a man of my years, might excite in the minds of those unacquainted with my motives. But to return to the extraordinary event which occurred last night. I hope you will do me the justice to suppose, that had I placed any credit in the tales related of the south wing, I would not have suffered either you or my niece to have been placed in that part of the castle. If Mademoiselle St. Viviers is well enough to leave her room, she shall be immediately accommodated with apartments nearer to those occupied by the Marchioness, who, I understand, has formed some arrangements respecting yourself, Mademoiselle, with which I cannot venture to interfere. The account which you have given me of the appearances which caused

you

you and Adelaide so much terror last night, I must request you will not repeat, as the peace of my household depends upon my taking every method to suppress all belief in supernatural agency; as, should I acknowledge my own conviction of its truth to any but yourself, Mademoiselle, and my niece, I should give countenance to the most idle and improbable tales."

The Marquis, who had now recovered much of his usual serenity, paused; and Henrietta arose.

"You wish to depart, Mademoiselle," said he; "I will no longer trespass on your patience. Permit me to applaud the heroic courage you have evinced in this affair; and let me entreat you to assure Mademoiselle St. Viviers, that she shall no longer be exposed to such alarms."

Henrietta bowed an assent and took her leave.

On returning to the apartment of Adelaide she found her risen, but extremely weak and pale.

Henrietta, alarmed at the looks of her friend, earnestly remonstrated on the imprudence she had been guilty of, in leaving her couch in such a state.

"Could I have obtained either repose or serenity of mind by devoting a few more hours to my pillow," said Adelaide, "I should not so soon have quitted it; but that has not been the case. The most frightful dreams have disturbed my imagination, and filled my ideas with the wildest apprehensions. Have you seen the Count St. Croix this morning?"

The eager and agitated manner in which Adelaide asked this question surprised and alarmed her friend, who, after a moment's silence, replied in the negative; and was proceeding to argue on the weakness of suffering the dreams which might naturally be supposed to follow the events of the night, to affect her spirits, when Adelaide, half rising from the sofa, exclaimed, in a tone of grief and despair—"Henrietta, I am not deceived. I feel a horrible conviction

viction that some ill has befallen St. Croix. I have already dispatched Marcella to seek him—she is not yet returned—her delay increases my fears. Dearest friend, will you relieve my mind from these dreadful terrors, by ascertaining ——"

Adelaide was interrupted by the entrance of Marcella, who, with a look of stupid amazement, and with inconsiderate abruptness, said—"That the Count St. Croix was nowhere to be found, and that he had not been in his own room all night."

CHAP. XII.

"NOT in his room during the whole night!" exclaimed Henrietta, wildly gazing on Marcella, while the alarmed Adelaide sunk lifeless on her bosom, faintly pronouncing the name of her lover.

"No, indeed," replied the dismayed Marcella; "that is, the Count has not been in his bed all night, for 'tis as smooth and nice as Jaqueline and Balbetta left it yesterday; and there's Monsieur du Bois, the Count's valet, and ever so many more of the servants that I have sent to seek their Lord, can't find him anywhere. But, holy Virgin! here are we talking, Mademoiselle,

moiselle, when I should be trying to recover my dear young lady from her swoon."

Adelaide, who had not however wholly fainted, now slowly raised her head, and demanded a repetition of Marcella's singular account of St. Croix's disappearance. The lovely girl's concern for her Henry seemed to recall her to an exertion of self command; and having received from the ancient attendant the most positive assurance that the Count could not be found, she arose, and, taking the arm of Henrietta, declared that she would immediately seek the Marquis.

Rendered insensible to her own weakness by the feelings of her mind, Adelaide without much difficulty reached the great hall, which she and Henrietta had scarcely entered, when they met a servant, who informed them, that the Count St. Croix had just returned, and was then in the east saloon with the Marquis, who desired to see Mademoiselle Vernor with the utmost speed.

The

The surprise this message might have occasioned the friends was lost in the joy which the certainty of St. Croix's safety excited in their bosoms.

Trembling, and almost overpowered by her emotions, Adelaide had now scarcely strength to reach the saloon, to which they were conducted by the servants, where a scene of the most distressing nature awaited them.

Scarcely had the folding doors of the apartment been thrown open, when the eyes of Adelaide rested on the figure of St. Croix, who, pale as death, his hair dishevelled, and his cloaths stained with blood, stood in the middle of the saloon, while the Marquis, whose looks were scarcely less terrific, was pacing the room in the utmost perturbation.

The sight of Adelaide, who, horror-struck and motionless, stood leaning on Henrietta, restored St. Croix to recollection. He flew towards her, and, clasping her to his bosom, bore her to a sofa, where, regardless

regardless of the loud reproaches of the Marquis, he continued to support her fainting form, and recalled her senses by the most tender and affecting expressions.

Alas! the sensibility of the unhappy Adelaide returned too soon, for the loud voice of St. Croix was almost overpowered by that of the Marquis, who, in loud and angry tones, continued—

"If your lover, Mademoiselle St. Viviers, thus despises the commands of your uncle, understand that from you, at least, I expect respect and obedience. Duped as I have been by the well planned artifice practised last night, I am not yet so credulous and lost to every sense of honour, as to be again deceived, or to pardon the infamous device which has proved the Count St. Croix so destitute of delicacy and respect."

Adelaide turned her timid eyes from the infuriate glances of her uncle to the pale countenance of her lover, who was gazing on her with a look of so much grief, impatience,

patience, and terror, that she had hardly power to demand an explanation.

" A dreadful and mysterious circumstance occasioned my being absent from my room all night, Adelaide," replied St. Croix, with a glance at St. Viviers, which seemed to affect the latter with the utmost force.

The Marquis, however, did not pause an instant in replying, but exclaimed—" 'Tis false !"

St. Croix started up, but was withheld by Adelaide, whose tears and entreaties caused him to check the wounded feelings of his soul, while St. Viviers continued—" 'Tis false as hell ! You were absent by design ; and, in a base and mean disguise, hast wandered through the castle, and sought to work on the fears of innocence and superstition, to accomplish designs of the most dark and disgraceful nature."

" Marquis," angrily exclaimed the Count, " this untrue and shameful defamation is unworthy of your rank and name.

If

If Mademoiselle St. Viviers can believe me capable of even for a moment disturbing her tranquillity by a trick so contemptible and unmanly, I should, indeed, be most deserving her scorn and abhorrence; but ——"

"How!" cried the Marquis. "Does not your whole appearance—your singular absence—your obstinate refusal to inform me where you passed the night—all afford the most convincing proofs that my suspicions are just?—Deluded Adelaide! glance your eyes on the habit, and the blood-stained hand of your ingenuous lover, and say, does not his appearance exactly coincide with that of the form which so much terrified you last night?"

The trembling Adelaide surveyed the dress and hands of St. Croix, and but too well perceived that his appearance did indeed but too truly correspond with that of the figure which she had seen cross her chamber, and disappear behind the tapestry.

"You

"You are then convinced?" exclaimed the Marquis, who had earnestly watched her looks.

"Suspend all decision, my Adelaide, I solemnly conjure you," cried St. Croix, in a tone of the deepest anguish. "Oh suffer not deceptive appearances to lead you to doubt the sincerity of him, who from childhood's earliest dawn has never once deceived you, and ——"

"What need of these adjurations?" interrupted the Marquis. "Inform me now how you spent the night, and explain the nature of the mystery which you say occurred to you, and then our doubts will vanish."

"I cannot—it is impossible!" replied St. Croix. He spoke with firmness; but the look he cast on Adelaide expressed the keenest anguish.

"This is admirable," observed the Marquis, with a bitter sneer. "Insensible to the delicacy of my niece's situation, you have solicited my permission to be immediately

diately united to her; and failing in that, you endeavoured to seduce her into a clandestine acquiescence in your wishes. Am I not therefore right in believing that you have availed yourself of the accidental knowledge of a superstitious fear, to assume an appearance calculated to intimidate, and fill the mind of my niece with the most unjust and cruel surmises—surmises which doubtless would have caused her to fly from my protection?"

"Surmises!" repeated St. Croix, while he fixed his penetrating eyes on the Marquis, with a look which seemed to throw the latter into the utmost rage and confusion. "The conscience of the Marquis St. Viviers can best inform him how far he merits surmises of horrible import. But this is not a time to urge the explanation of a mystery which may yet be developed, and at a most unexpected hour.—Adelaide," he continued, turning towards the astonished and alarmed Mademoiselle St. Viviers, "if those sacred promises of faith,

uttered in the presence of our parents, still hold their influence o'er your mind, refuse not your assent to an immediate union. You are mine by a farther just demand—you are mine by all those ties of fond and early affection, and there is now no power on earth shall dare to force you from me."

"Dare not!—Insolent!" exclaimed the Marquis. "Never shall this union take place. As I am the natural guardian of Mademoiselle St. Viviers, you will soon find the impracticability of opposing my power; and I command her instantly to reject the hand of him, who, by the most mean and contemptible artifices, has proved himself so much her inferior."

The Marquis advanced to lead the hapless Adelaide from the room, but St. Croix, wildly grasping his arm, spoke to him a moment in a low whisper. Neither Adelaide nor Henrietta, who was a silent spectator of this scene, could distinguish the words uttered by the Count; but the im-

mediate effect they produced upon the Marquis proved them of terrific meaning. An ashy paleness chased the flush of passion from his cheek; and, sinking on a sofa, he waved his hand to Adelaide and her friend to leave the apartment.

The agitation and embarrassment of both rendered them incapable of obeying his wish, till, in a faint voice, he mildly requested the Count to attend the ladies to their apartment, and instantly return.

St. Croix immediately led Adelaide from the room; and, in crossing the hall, whispered his belief, that the Marquis would speedily yield his consent to their union.

Scarcely attending to his rapturous expressions of hope, Adelaide besought the Count to explain the cause of his singular and mysterious appearance; and, with a look of terror, again observed, his dress, and the marks of blood on his hand, were most strikingly resembling those of the object which had so much appalled her in the night.

"Reasons

"Reasons of the most important nature, my Adelaïde," replied St. Croix, "compel me speedily to rejoin the Marquis; I cannot therefore at present enter into any explanation relative to the mystery which envelopes me; but this I can with safety assure you, that I am innocent of having caused you the slightest alarm, nor did I even know that you had suffered such terrors, till informed of the circumstance by the Marquis. Tranquillize your spirits, my beloved Adelaide, and reflect, that the period for ending of these trials is fast approaching—that happy moment, when your Henry may exult in the blessed conviction, that he shall possess the right of guarding you from every evil."

They had now reached the gallery, into which the door of Adelaide's apartment opened; and St. Croix was reluctantly obliged to depart, but not till he had given her repeated assurances that he would not suffer himself to be drawn into any quarrel with the Marquis, should the latter be inclined to display any further anger.

CHAP. XIII.

SUSPENSIVE terror and astonishment so fully occupied the minds of both Adelaide and Henrietta, that neither had the slightest appetite to partake the breakfast which they found had been set in the anti-room during their absence; the latter, however, endeavoured to overcome her own feelings, in order to chear the spirits of her friend, who with the utmost difficulty she prevailed upon to swallow a cup of coffee.

When the breakfast equipage was removed, Henrietta hesitatingly enquired whether Adelaide was really certain that the appearance of the Count St. Croix, and the figure she had beheld on the preceding

ceding night, were so exactly alike as she, in the first moments of surprise, was led to imagine?

Adelaide replied in the affirmative; but at the same time expressed the firmest confidence in the veracity of her lover, who, she said, was incapable of practising a deception of so low and cruel a nature.

Henrietta listened in silence—she did not conceive there was so much criminality in the act; and secretly imagined it very probable, that a young man situated as was the Count, thus harrassed with the dread of losing the object of his fondest hopes, might so far deviate from the rigid rectitude of his usual principles, to secure the hand of his long betrothed bride. These suspicions, however, she resolved not to hint to Adelaide, and, after a short pause, said—"The Marquis, during my interview with him this morning, informed me, that a death-like figure, resembling the Chevalier Durancy, had in the night undrawn the curtains of his bed; how then

could he suppose that the Count could have assumed such a form, unless the appearance of your lover corresponded exactly with that of the phantom supposed to haunt the castle?"

This was a mystery Adelaide could not solve; and every conjecture on the subject was suspended by the re-entrance of Marcella, followed by Beatrix, who came to inform Mademoiselle St. Viviers, that her new apartment was already prepared, and that the Marchioness, who had heard of her having quitted her room, requested to see her and Mademoiselle Henrietta in her own apartment, where the Marquis and the Count St. Croix had just sent an intimation to her lady, that they should attend in less than an hour.

Beatrix now gave into the hands of Adelaide a billet, which, on opening, she found had been addressed to her by the Marquis. It contained only a most serious injunction not to notice the events of the night or morning in the presence of

of the Marchioness, and a request that Mademoiselle Vernor would observe the same silence.

As both the young friends were of opinion that the contents of this billet afforded just grounds for concluding that the Marquis and the Count St. Croix were no longer at variance, it of course gave them much satisfaction; their surprise, however, was much increased by the prohibition, not to mention any of the circumstances which had recently occurred before the Marchioness, whom they imagined must have learned from some of her women, at least an imperfect account of the mysterious tales related of the Chevalier Durancy; that she, however, was utterly ignorant of almost every occurrence in the castle, they soon ascertained, by Beatrix's saying, as she led them through the long galleries, and wide hall leading to the other side of the castle—"that her lady, the Marchioness, had never seen a quarter of the apartments, and never knew

more of what was passing within the walls than if she lived a thousand miles off. For," continued the old dame, "the loss of our places, and confinement for life in the dungeons, would be the least any of the servants might expect for disobeying the commands of the Marquis, who has threatened us even with death, if we were to tell her anything without his permission."

Adelaide made no observation on this speech; but it filled her mind with an involuntary sensation of horror, and she could scarce support the idea, that the brother of her lamented father should prove so mysterious, and, she feared, so dreadful a character; while Henrietta felt an alarming presentiment of evil steal o'er her heart, and wished her young friend and herself a thousand miles from the castle.

At length, Adelaide having refused to see her own apartment till after she had visited the Marchioness, they proceeded to the saloon, where that lady usually sat, when

when not engaged with her women in the embroidering room.

She received both with the kindest expressions of pleasure, and, attributing the pale and serious looks of Henrietta to the fatigue and anxiety she had suffered for Adelaide, loaded her with thanks and compliments, while o'er her niece she lamented with unfeigned solicitude, not having found her as much recovered as she had expected. The good old lady, however, had not long an opportunity of continuing her condolements, as the entrance of the Marquis and the Count St. Croix interrupted her.

The emotion of Adelaide was now excessive; her eyes first encountered the form of her uncle; his looks were placid and melancholy, and his dark eyes rested on her with that mild glance which so much reminded her of her lost father. An involuntary tear dimmed her sight; but the voice of St. Croix addressing the Marchioness recalled her to recollection, and she

turned her eyes toward him. The Count was now habited in his usual dress; but his hand was enveloped in a bandage, while his looks by no means partook of the calm solemnity of those of the Marquis; they were, however, not the looks of unpleasant emotion, and he approached Adelaide with an animated tenderness in his manner, that denoted he had been successful. Of this an immediate confirmation followed, in the Marquis's informing the Marchioness, that some circumstances were likely to occur, which would render the speedy union of his niece and her destined lord indispensable; that he had therefore prevailed upon her to retract her intention of devoting a year to mourning; and that the marriage was to be solemnized in the castle, as soon as the necessary preparations for its celebration could be made.

The Marchioness did not seem to be perfectly pleased with this arrangement, and expressed some slight reluctance at the prospect

prospect of so soon losing a niece who had already engaged her tenderest affection; but accustomed to consider the will of her lord as unquestionably just and prudent, she at length testified her approbation, and offered the warmest congratulations to Adelaide, who had listened to the Marquis's speech with mingled pleasure and fear. The joy of Henrietta, however, displayed itself in the most striking manner; while the Marquis, with a serious smile, and in a low voice, conversed calmly with his lady, relative to the splendid style in which he meant to honour the nuptials of his niece.

The transition from the most agitative feelings of dread and horror to hope, soon proved more than Adelaide could well support; and anxiously desiring to tranquillize her mind in solitude with her friend, she took leave of the Marchioness, and, with Henrietta, was conducted to her new apartments, which, if not so magnificent as the former suite, were infinitely

more chearful, especially the anti-room, which she perceived had a large marble balcony, opening on a terrace which overhung the ramparts, and commanded a grand and striking view, bounded by the snow-crowned summits of the Alps.

These apartments were also much nearer to those of the Marchioness, and on the inhabited side of the castle. The walls of the anti-room, chamber, and dressing-room, were all hung alike with light green damask, and the furniture was by no means so massy and antique as that of her late apartments. A profusion of gilding, however, ornamented every object in her rooms, and large plumes of blue feathers waved o'er the canopy of the bed; and the chearing light admitted through the large casements banished every appearance of gloom, while a bright wood fire, blazing in the wide hearths, added to the air of liveliness which distinguished these apartments.

Scarcely had Adelaide had time to look around

around her new habitation, when the Marquis and Count St. Croix entered the anti-room. The Marquis, with the same easy gravity which he wore in the presence of the Marchioness, hoped his niece was satisfied with her present accommodations; after which he said, that he had ventured to intrude, with an intention of assuring her, that the Count St. Croix had most satisfactorily accounted for his absence from his apartment during the last night, and that he no longer supposed him to be the author of the mysterious circumstances, which caused so much alarm and uneasiness. He then withdrew, leaving St. Croix with Adelaide and Henrietta in the anti-chamber.

"And now, my Adelaide," said the Count, "let me avail myself of this moment to entreat that you will add to the felicity I now enjoy, by pardoning me when I say, that to obtain your hand I have pledged myself by the most sacred vows never to reveal to you the mystery which

which involves my conduct of last night. Accuse me not of rashness or insincerity; the circumstances which I have sworn not to mention are vague, and even unexplanatory of the secrets with which they are doubtless connected; they could afford you no satisfaction to hear, and the knowledge of them might embitter your peace of mind. Say then, beloved of my soul, dearest Adelaide, can you forgive a reluctant reserve, which the dread of for ever losing you has compelled me to promise?"

Adelaide was undoubtedly infinitely disappointed in her hope of receiving an explanation, which should divest her lover's recent action of every appearance of ambiguity; but confiding in his long tried love and truth, she did not hesitate to assure him of her forgiveness, although she could not forbear expressing a regret, that his silence would prevent her ascertaining the real character of her uncle—a point of much importance to her, as she could not but confess that she was impressed

pressed with the most unfavourable, and even dreadful opinion of his principles.

St. Croix gazed on her a moment in embarrassment and concern. At length he said—"The Marquis, indeed, needs all your prayers and compassion."

This evasive reply admitted of two interpretations; and the piety of Adelaide taught her to judge with meekness and charity; she therefore raised her beauteous eyes to Heaven, saying—"I understand my uncle is less guilty than unfortunate. Oh, may my prayers be heard in his behalf!"

"Innocent, artless angel!" sighed St. Croix, gazing on her with rapture, "may thy pure soul never be shocked with the knowledge of the crimes, the misfortunes ——. But hence with this frightful subject, and let me once again behold the sweet smile which beamed on the cheek of Adelaide in our early days of happiness." She threw on her lover a mild glance of sad reproof, while she said—

"Why will you recall to my memory those days which past so swiftly—those hours of joy," she continued, in a tone of heartfelt grief, "when our parents' endearing kindness blessed our affection, and taught us to feel the unalloyed sweets of existence—the consciousness of rendering others as happy as ourselves?"

St. Croix, with a wildness of look and manner by no means natural to him, inveighed against his own imprudence; and it was not till Adelaide, in pity to him, had assumed an appearance of tranquillity, that he could be prevailed upon to retire from the apartment.

CHAP. XIV.

WHEN the Count had left them, Adelaide, finding herself rather more indisposed, would have sent an apology to the Marchioness, who had requested her niece and Henrietta to dine in her apartments, had not Miss Vernor, who dreaded that reflection and solitude would afford her friend too much opportunity of perceiving that the mind of St. Croix was secretly suffering the severest agitation, prevailed upon her to make an effort to leave her room. In this Henrietta was right—for the little hurry of dressing prevented the thoughts of Adelaide from intently dwelling on the recent

recent occurrences; and when she joined the Marchioness at dinner, she found herself much recovered.

St. Croix was of the party; but the Marquis was absent during dinner: the Marchioness spoke of fetes and balls, which she intended to immediately give, and declared her intention of throwing open the castle to visitors.

This intimation was by no means pleasing to Adelaide; but St. Croix evidently endeavoured to fix the Marchioness in her designs, and spoke with so much animation on the subject, that Adelaide now, indeed, perceived the change in his manner, and observed his ill-assumed gaiety with sensations of excessive uneasiness and surprise; however, there was no opportunity during the whole evening of questioning him on the subject — for, soon after dinner, the Marquis, accompanied by two gentlemen, made his appearance.

The elder of the strangers was introduced to the young ladies and Count St. Croix

Croix as the Chevalier Bionville, the younger as the Chevalier de Valmont. To the Marchioness both appeared to be well known. There was so much character in the appearance of these gentlemen, that although the introduction of strangers was a circumstance by no means pleasing to Adelaide, yet she found her attention repeatedly engaged by their conversation.

Bionville, a man apparently turned of fifty, and of a singularly unprepossessing appearance, displayed a considerable share of wit and knowledge of the world in all he said; but it was evidently a depraved knowledge of the world that he possessed; and his satire was not that lively representation of all that is ludicrous in vice and affectation, but the keen acrimonious effusions of a malicious disposition, inclined to think and speak evil of all mankind.

The Chevalier de Valmont appeared to be exactly the reverse of Bionville—young, animated, polite, sensible, and unaffected; he uttered his sentiments with warmth; and,

and, although he seemed to be deficient in lively repartee and pointed sarcasm, yet he evinced, by a thousand little traits, that he possessed an excellent heart and a well informed mind.

St. Croix, on the introduction of these gentlemen, observed them with an earnest attention, which did not fail to attract the notice of Adelaide; and she soon perceived a most striking reserve in his manner to the Chevalier Bionville, while his deportment towards De Valmont was open and friendly in the extreme.

To this distinction of conduct, Bionville, however, appeared insensible, and directed almost his whole attention to Henrietta Vernor, with whom he appeared much struck, and who seemed to be no less an object of attraction to the young Chevalier de Valmont.

However, notwithstanding the chearful good humour of the Marchioness, and the unembarrassed politeness of her lord, a degree of silence and constraint soon pervaded

vaded the whole party; and the Marquis at length withdrew with the Chevalier Bionville.

Scarcely were they out of hearing, when the Marchioness, addressing De Valmont, said—"Your guardian, my young friend, seems to be in one of his best humours to-day, to which lucky circumstance I imagine we are indebted for being favoured with a sight of you?"

De Valmont smiled, and replied, that "he hoped the very propitious disposition of the Chevalier de Bionville would continue, as his leave of absence from his regiment must soon expire, and therefore he should leave Dauphiny with many regrets, were his visits to the castle restricted."

While the young Chevalier spoke, St. Croix listened to him with much attention; and then made some slight remark on the severe singularity of Bionville, after which he drew the Chevalier to the window, and spoke to him a few minutes in private.

This

This incident appeared, however, merely accidental, that it did not e the attention of the Marchioness; Adelaide, who had a full view of De mont's countenance, perceived that he peared to be very much agitated. S after the young Chevalier took his le and, as the Marchioness usually re early to repose, Adelaide, Henrietta, St. Croix did not continue with her n longer.

There was so much sadness in the n ner of St. Croix, when he bade Adel adieu for the night, that she felt her mind irresistibly overwhelmed with deepest depression; but, on percei that to question him on the mystery o deportment might embarrass and a him, she suppressed her wishes of so d and bade him good night, with a smi assumed chearfulness.

CHAP. XV.

DAY after day, and even weeks, now passed on, without any particular cause of uneasiness, except what resulted from the impracticability which the lovers found in all their attempts to obtain an interview with each other alone; and at length several half-rallying, half-ironical hints from the Marquis, on the impatience which he thought proper to intimate that Adelaide displayed to be in private with the young Count, so truly shocked the delicate mind of this amiable girl, that she at length positively assured St. Croix that she would see him only in presence of the Marquis and Marquise till the day of their union; for

for the celebration of which great preparations were making in the castle, as the Marchioness intended honouring the nuptials of her niece, by inviting some of the first families in the province on that day.

Henrietta, who was still permitted to sleep in the same apartment with Adelaide, beheld these preparations with as little satisfaction as her friend; however, when the two months were nearly expired, the anticipation of Adelaide's speedy emancipation from the power of the Marquis gave the most lively animation to her spirits; and she spoke of their departure for Gascony in raptures. But the heart of Adelaide was irresistibly sad; and her still dwelling with anguish on the terrific fate of her lamented father was not calculated to exhilirate the spirits of this lovely girl; and she felt hurt at the Marquis's deeming so much *eclat* necessary to an union, which he well knew was expedited by the most mysterious circumstances.

Situated as she was, however, Adelaide could

could not venture to urge any objections to these unpleasant arrangements; and she seldom left her room, till one day she was compelled to join a large party assembled to dinner, in a frame of mind which gave a tincture of deep melancholy to her countenance. Her extreme beauty, however, the almost unequalled elegance of her person and manners, her youth, and mourning habit, all conspired to render her so interesting an object, that few beheld her without experiencing the warmest sentiments of admiration.

Amongst the company were the Chevaliers Bionville and De Valmont; the latter, however, although his eyes were intently fixed on Henrietta, did not once approach her, while his guardian followed her steps during the whole evening, and paid her the most assiduous attentions—attentions which the poor Henrietta received with a very ill grace, and would most readily have dispensed with.

To the secret grief of Adelaide, she still could perceive that the manner of St. Croix was but the gay exterior covering of a most disturbed mind. She frequently caught his eyes fixed on her, with looks which expressed the keenest anxiety and sorrow, while his language, when he addressed her, was always animated and tender.

But the dissipation of the day forbade all attempts at explanation; and once more Adelaide was obliged to retire to her chamber, without having found a single opportunity of privately speaking to St. Croix.

Not inclined to sleep, the young friends dismissed Marcella, who did not now pass the night in the anti-chamber, and then began conversing on the occurrences of the day; for Adelaide, conscious that all conjectures on the mystery which involved her Henry would be equally idle and unsatisfactory, had resolved to drop that subject;

subject; but in vain did she speak of several of the strangers they had seen in the day.

Henrietta was absent, and abstracted in her own reflections, and for once her friend found her an inattentive auditor.

Adelaide, though possessed of all that feminine delicacy which is so amiable in youth, could not avoid perceiving that Henrietta had an air of diffidence and embarrassment while in the presence of the Chevalier de Valmont; and she now scrupled not to attribute the very unusual silence of her friend to his idea occupying her mind.

Henrietta was instantaneously awakened from her reverie by the smiling observations of Adelaide, who, anxious for the peace of mind of Miss Vernor, made a faint attempt to rally her on the subject of her thoughts.

Deeply blushing, Henrietta ingenuously confessed that her mind was indeed occupied by the Chevalier de Valmont. "But,"

she continued, " not exactly in the manner you imagine—for I was reflecting on the singular, and partly concealed confidence, which I suspect exists between the Count St. Croix and the Chevalier. I believe that they never saw each other till they met here; and yet I accidentally overheard De Valmont say to the Count, that their friendship was cemented by bonds which could never be broken. You accuse me of reserve and inattention, my dear Adelaide; but indeed it is impossible to preserve a quiet and chearful equanimity of temper, in the midst of so many mysteries. Would that your nuptials were once over, and we were safe out of this detested place."

Henrietta had scarcely ceased speaking, when her attention was attracted by the faint sound of music, which seemed as at no great distance.

The door of the anti-room was opened; Adelaide, who had also distinctly heard the soft strain, arose and walked towards the balcony,

balcony, whither she was followed by her friend. The music was now discovered to proceed from the terrace under the balcony, and in a moment Adelaide exclaimed—"It is St. Croix—he plays an air which was my favourite from infancy. This is surely some signal entreating my attention. Will you venture into the balcony with me, Henrietta?"

Henrietta instantly flew to the window, and, throwing open the heavy casement, they stepped out into the balcony. The night was cold, but the beams of a clear moon falling on the surrounding scenery rendered the figures on the terrace distinctly visible.

It was St. Croix and De Valmont. The former, on beholding Adelaide, swiftly ascended a ladder, which was placed against the balcony, saying—"My Adelaide may be convinced, that whatever apology my intrusion at this hour requires, that necessity alone could induce me to hazard her displeasure."

"I am not displeased, St. Croix," returned the lovely girl, much affected by the emotion which trembled in the voice of her lover; "I am alarmed, and dread, though I wish to learn the cause of this singular visit."

"I will not say how grateful I am for this goodness," replied St. Croix; "but to be compelled to steal thus to an interview with you——Oh, Adelaide! my forbearance exceeds my own belief; and yet, may I not lose you after all!—may not this cruel, this enforced mystery, be a horrible means of depriving me of you for ever!"

"St. Croix, you rave," cried the affrighted Adelaide. "What do these frantic expressions mean?—You terrify me.—Oh, my father, hadst thou but lived!"

The Count supported her into the anti-room, and now endeavoured to suppress his own excessive agitation.

"Pardon these flights, beloved Adelaide. I will trust in that power, who can alone

alone shield us from evil—But the time flies. I have thus rashly dared to intrude, to tell you that we are most grossly deceived. The Marquis affects an acquiescence in our union, which he is set upon frustrating; he seeks to delay the performance of the sacred ceremony, till his vile agents have devised the means of separating us for ever. In a few days I shall receive a peremptory command to join my regiment, which I fear will soon be ordered abroad. You will now decide the happiness or misery of my future life. Yet a little moment of hope remains. The Chevalier de Valmont, that amiable young man, has undertaken to accomplish our escape. Will you then instantly fly with me, or doom me to unutterable ruin? Oh, Adelaide, hesitate not—if this opportunity is lost, we are separated for ever in this world. Affairs of a private and important nature may compel De Valmont to immediately hasten to England; Ma-

demoiselle Vernor will accompany us thither."

"St. Croix," said the astonished Adelaide, "have not the illusions of vain terror misled your understanding? In a few days you expect to receive a positive command to join your regiment, and yet I see you here urging me to accompany you to a foreign land. Do you suppose that your fame and glory are not dear to me?—they are dearer to me than life; and never will I do an act so weak, as that of consenting to your present imprudent plan, and destroy at once your glory and your life; for certain am I, that my Henry could not survive the loss of his honour, were even his pardon for such a desertion to be obtained."

The Count fell at her feet, and hid his face in her robe. She extended her hand to raise him, continuing—"I am, indeed, ignorant of what I have to dread from the power of my uncle, but certainly his designs

signs cannot aim at my life; and while I have confidence in the protection of Heaven, wherefore should I fear? No—go, dearest Henry, pursue that path which your honour points out; and be assured, that while your Adelaide exists, she lives but for you alone. No power—not the severest trials can ever force me to break my plighted faith with thee."

The Count gazed on her awhile in silent agony—then wildly starting up, he clasped her eagerly to his breast, exclaiming, in a voice almost inarticulate with emotion—"Oh, Adelaide, you have, I fear, consigned me to destruction!—'Tis too late for farther prevarication. Know then, that I have this night received the most urgent recall to my regiment, which now lies at Toulon, waiting, I fear, orders for embarkation on some secret expedition. Deprive me not then of this only opportunity of at least placing you in safety ere I depart. Not an hour back the Marquis refused me permission to see you, and insulted

sulted me with hypocritical assurances, that he would apologize to you for the abruptness of my departure, in such a manner as must make you sensible, that nothing but the most urgent necessity could have induced me to leave the castle without seeing you. Imagine from this trait what we have to expect from this cruel man.—Grant me patience, Heaven! What have I not struggled to endure, in respect to thy feelings, my Adelaide—and can you thus trifle with mine?"

Adelaide, who, pale and aghast, had listened to her lover's mingled entreaties and reproaches, now softly withdrew from his supporting arm; and although plunged into the extreme of internal misery, by learning that he was so soon to depart, perhaps for ever, nobly combated with her own feelings, and, resting her grief-chilled hand on the shoulder of St. Croix, softly repeated her vows of unchanging constancy and affection, while her tears were restrained by the hope of inspiring him with courage

courage to emulate the example of resignation and prudence, which she was endeavouring to set him. Assuring him that her peace of mind depended on his not sullying his honour by unavailing delays, she promised to use every effort to escape from the castle, and seek shelter in a convent till his return.

The hasty and unexpected entrance of De Valmont prevented St. Croix's reply.

"Forgive, Mademoiselle, my unavoidable intrusion," said he, in a hurried voice; "a circumstance has just occurred, which renders the immediate return of my friend to his chamber necessary.—St. Croix, lights are moving in the eastern tower—we may be discovered, and then every hope must vanish."

"Oh, my friend, your cares are unavailing," replied the Count, in a voice of agony. "I shall set off to join my regiment in less than three hours. And now I claim your promise, De Valmont—I commit Mademoiselle St. Viviers to your protection.

Adelaide, my friend will secretly watch over your safety—confide in him, and oh, if possible, quit this abode of horror."

Once more he clasped Adelaide to his heart—she fainted, pronouncing his name; and the utmost efforts of De Valmont could not have succeeded in forcing St. Croix away, had not the afflicted Henrietta represented to him the imprudence of farther agitating the sorrow-weakened spirits of her friend.

Some time elapsed after the distracted St. Croix had wildly torn himself from gazing on the lifeless features of his beauteous Adelaide, ere she was restored to animation, and to a sense of all the horrors of her situation.

The night was mutually passed by the young friends in a state of the utmost distress and consternation; and the return of morning found Adelaide rather delirious, the accumulation of her sorrows, and this [illegible] of her lover, having [illegible] of her senses.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVI.

AT an early hour the Marquis sent a small billet to his niece, informing her of the recall of the Count to his regiment, and apologizing for his having been compelled, by fears he had entertained for her health and spirits, to refuse permission to the Count St. Croix to see her before his departure, alledging, as his excuse, that "he could not possibly suffer his beloved niece to be disturbed at such an hour."

Adelaide, however, was in no state to read this curious billet; but Henrietta feeling herself authorized, by her friendship for Mademoiselle St. Viviers, to open and

and peruse its contents, did so; and while she felt both indignation and contempt for the folly and hypocrisy of the writer, conceived the idea that he was entirely ignorant of the Count's midnight visit—a circumstance which she now imagined he could not have any further chance of discovering, and which it seemed best to conceal. When, therefore, the Marquis towards noon came to the anti-room to enquire after the health of his niece, Miss Vernor merely said, that Adelaide was indisposed with a cold, and had not yet perused his billet. The Marquis now spoke of St. Croix's sudden departure; and as Henrietta was no hypocrite, he easily perceived that she was already acquainted with the fact; and he now composedly enquired, whether the Count had not visited the apartments of his niece on the last night? The silence and uneasiness of Henrietta would have replied for her, but she ingenuously confessed he had; and thus, by a well affected know-

ledge

ledge of the circumstance, he learned that his suspicions were just. But, as even the most artful not unfrequently betray themselves by some slight inadvertence, Henrietta, to her great vexation, soon discovered that the Marquis had indeed only suspected the visit of the Count; and she now almost blamed herself for having confessed the fact, lest her imprudence should lead to a discovery of the Chevalier de Valmont's private friendship with St. Croix.

This ill consequence, however, did not occur; and at length, when Adelaide, after a week's confinement, was able to leave her apartments, the first person whom she perceived in the saloon of the Marchioness was De Valmont.

The Marchioness, to whom Adelaide's sufferings seemed to have infinitely endeared her, displayed so much pity and maternal tenderness, that the afflicted girl began to hope, that with such a protectress she could not have so much to apprehend from the designs of her uncle, as the

the fears of the Count St. Croix had led him to suppose; and this idea assisted to restore some degree of tranquillity to her mind.

A few minutes after she had entered the saloon, the Marquis made his appearance. Adelaide involuntarily shrunk from him, as with an air of the utmost tenderness he took her hand, and congratulated her on her recovery.

He perceived her feelings, and said, while he presented to her a small packet—"If Mademoiselle receives these letters with the same degree of aversion with which I am sorry to find she accepts my sincere gratulations, the Count St. Croix will indeed deserve my utmost commiseration."

Adelaide heard him not—she perceived the hand-writing of St. Croix, and she forgot all but that dear lover. Eagerly availing herself of the plea the letter afforded, of retiring to her chamber, she hastily withdrew alone.

The

The letters, which were written from different posts in his road, contained nothing but the most impassioned expressions of love and grief—nor did he, even in the most remote degree, touch on the mysteries of the castle, or his friendship with De Valmont. Still they were inestimable to Adelaide, and they were bathed in her tears.

A summons to dinner interrupted her mournful occupation; most reluctantly she obeyed, and, to her extreme mortification, found, as usual, the Chevalier de Bionville added to the party. He was again seated by the side of Henrietta, who now, as ever, received his assiduities with the most frigid coldness.

Soon after dinner the gentlemen withdrew; and the Marchioness now spoke of the indulgence she had granted Henrietta, and promised to continue it, if the Marquis permitted her to do so. An event, however, occurred on the day following, which

which caused a most material difference in his conduct to Henrietta.

During the evening, the Chevalier de Valmont took several opportunities for speaking to Henrietta, and soon found means of slipping into her hand a letter, which he said came from St. Croix.

When the friends retired for the night Henrietta gave the letter to Adelaide, who now found that the Count had not thought proper to mention his real plans or wishes in the letters which he sent publicly to her. The present epistle contained the most earnest and reiterated entreaties to her to quit her castle; and informed her, that should she wish it, the Chevalier de Valmont, who was bound by no oaths, was at liberty to acquaint her with the circumstances which had given rise to their friendship. St. Croix then continued, in the most tender and melancholy style of affection, and again urged the necessity of her quitting the castle, and taking refuge

in a convent. He concluded with assuring her, that he hoped soon to receive certain intelligence respecting Don Alvarez de Suza, the uncle of the deceased Countess, her mother.

This letter restored Adelaide to some slight degree of tranquillity; but alas, that peaceful frame of mind was but momentary, for as she reflected on the singularity of her situation, it vanished. Compelled to feel an incessant dread of she knew not what evil, and to expect that evil from the hand of a near relative, she felt all her hope and fortitude forsake her —and it was some time ere the pious influence of prayer could restore her to self-command.

Composed by devotion she now resolved to seek an explanation relative to the friendship of St. Croix with the Chevalier de Valmont, and to form her positive determinations for the future, according to the necessity she should perceive of quickly quitting the castle.

The

The morning dawned ere the friends sunk into a short repose, from which they awakened to encounter new vexations.—They breakfasted with the Marchioness; and when the repast was concluded, the Marquis sent a request to see Miss Vernor. She immediately attended him, and found that he was deputed by the Chevalier de Bionville to make her an offer of his hand and fortune.

Henrietta instantly negatived this suit; and the Marquis, affecting the utmost displeasure and surprise at her rejection of so excellent an offer, assured her, that as she had thought proper, while under his protection, to judge so hastily and positively for herself, he felt under the disagreeable necessity of requesting that she would, while she continued in the castle, abide by the arrangements made by the Marchioness, and henceforward avoid any intercourse beyond the apartments of his lady, who he imagined could by no means desire a young lady possessed of so much self-

decision

decision and spirit to be the companion of her niece.

Henrietta was confounded at the commencement of this speech; but quickly recovering a sense of the respect she owed to herself, she begged the Marquis to recollect that she was a visitor in the castle, and not a dependant; and that, if she had assented to the singular arrangements of the Marchioness, she did not at the time conceive that it would seclude her from the society of her friend.

"You will see my niece daily in the apartments of the Marchioness, Mademoiselle," said the Marquis. "I wish only to restrict that confidential intercourse, which has furnished you with so many opportunities of encouraging the prejudices and obstinacy of Mademoiselle St. Viviers."

"The prejudices and obstinacy of Adelaide, Marquis!" cried the amazed Henrietta; "deign to explain the meaning of this singular accusation. Do you impute to

to me that my friend is harrassed by mystery and sorrows?"

"These mysteries, I will allow, are cause for anxiety; but are not my rank and character sufficient assurances that my niece cannot be injured by remaining under my protection?—why then do you, Mademoiselle, endeavour to convince her that she would act prudently in flying clandestinely from her affectionate relative, to whom her happiness is dear as his own?"

Henrietta, after a short pause, replied—"By what means you have learned that I have strenuously urged Mademoiselle St. Viviers to leave the castle, Marquis, I am yet to learn; but I will not deny that I have done so—nay, I will confess that I think the singularity of her situation would have justified such a step."

The unembarrassed candour of Henrietta threw the Marquis into momentary confusion—he had expected she would have been confounded at his declaring his knowledge

ledge of her advice to Adelaide, and his disappointment was extreme. At length recovering from his surprise, he said—"I applaud your ingenuousness, Mademoiselle Vernor; but allow me to remark, that you seem to possess more sincerity than delicacy."

"Very probably, my Lord; as plain sincerity is the characteristic of my country, I trust I shall ever retain this national propensity: and permit me to say, that I did not expect to find so much asperity in a native of the most polite country in the world."

"This raillery is ill-timed, Mademoiselle," said the Marquis rather haughtily: "I must request you will point out to me the wonderful singularity which you have discovered in my niece's situation."

"Can the Marquis St. Viviers reflect for a moment on the occurrences which have passed since our arrival at the castle, and demand any explanation? The dreadful appearance at midnight—the strange mys-

tery attached to the scene which passed in your study on the morning after, and the sudden and unexpected departure of the Count St. Croix."

"A short time will explain all these seeming mysteries, Mademoiselle; and as to the recall of the Count St. Croix to the army, that was an event which might very naturally be expected."

"By no means," said Henrietta, "as his leave of absence will not expire these three months."

"Well, but we are on the eve of a war with your country, Mademoiselle. However, I shall not say anything farther on a subject on which you appear so much prejudiced. I perceive I have nothing to hope from your good opinion, and can only request that you will forbear any farther intimacy with my niece. Your society can only increase her unhappiness, without producing the least benefit to yourself. I wait to attend you to the Marchioness, Mademoiselle."

Had

Had not the pride of Henrietta interfered, she would now have solicited permission to see her friend once more in private; but justly imagining that her request would be granted only on some condition, to which she might not judge proper to agree, she silently suffered the Marquis to conduct her to the apartments of his lady, who now received her with a degree of coldness, which proved to her that her separation from Adelaide was a premeditated act.

When the Marquis had withdrawn, the Marchioness repeated a long lecture to Henrietta on the duties of modesty and submission to the opinions and judgment of those older and more experienced than herself—and concluded by saying that she was sorry to hear that Mademoiselle Henrietta had endeavoured to incense her niece with very unfavourable sentiments of the Marquis her uncle.

Henrietta felt much inclined to reveal

all she had witnessed since her arrival to the Marchioness; but the Marquis had taken effectual care to guard against such a *denouement*, by whispering, as they entered the saloon, that the happiness of Mademoiselle St. Viviers now depended on the silence and prudence of her friend. —Thus compelled to observe the most rigid taciturnity, Henrietta suffered the Marchioness to proceed without interruption; and while the old lady continued her advice, she sat meditating on the most likely means of seeing Adelaide in private.

Miss Vernor possessed a quick and discriminating comprehension; and a few minutes reflection convinced her, that the situation of her beloved Adelaide was now indeed mysteriously alarming, and, urged by the affection she bore the amiable girl, Henrietta resolved not to leave the castle, but to render herself as agreeable as possible to the Marchioness and her women,

and,

and, if possible, devise some means of extricating her friend from the perils which she but too much dreaded would befal her.

Thus resolved, Henrietta replied to the long lecture of the Marchioness with much gentleness, and soon perceived that that lady was much gratified by her behaviour.

CHAP. XVII.

MEANWHILE Adelaide awaited impatiently the return of her friend from the Marquis; but two hours passed on, and Henrietta did not appear; and she was on the point of sending Marcella to seek her, when she received a message requesting her own attendance in the study of the Marquis.

Adelaide proceeded thither with much reluctance—the recollection of the scene she had witnessed there on the morning succeeding the night after she had been so terrified, recurred forcibly to her mind; and when she entered the room, she was

so

so much affected, that the Marquis, after expressing the greatest concern at her appearance, proposed deferring the subject on which he had wished to see her to some other opportunity.

Adelaide, who dreaded nothing so much as repeated interviews with her uncle, made an effort to suppress her feelings, and requested him not to delay acquainting her with what he wished to communicate.

The Marquis now with much hesitation related the nature of his interview with Henrietta, and its result.

Adelaide listened to him with foreboding anticipations of sorrow, and internally beheld in this capricious deprivation of her friend's society the commencement of new troubles. Pale and agitated, she ventured to entreat a remission of this cruel arrangement; but the Marquis, though much affected by her manner, firmly denied her request, and spoke of Henrietta with more than common asperity.

"Then I may, I suppose, be permitted

to share the amusements and occupations of Miss Vernor in the apartments of the Marchioness?" said Adelaide, with an air of gravity, which betrayed how much she was hurt by the refusal of the Marquis, who now replied—" I believe Mademoiselle St. Viviers need not be informed by me how truly singular and eccentric are the manners of the Marchioness. You know, I think, that your aunt, after having allotted each of her women their task in the embroidering-room, passes the whole of the morning till dinner alone; and that she seldom permits society to assemble in her saloon, even in an afternoon. I imagine that she will not permit you to associate with her women; and I can safely affirm, that you cannot be allowed to break in upon her hours of retirement and meditation—from which her confessor alone is not excluded; even I do not at such times intrude on her solitude."

Adelaide now represented the excessive rudeness of confining Miss Vernor to the embroi-

embroidering-room; and mentioned the insult her friend had received with more animation than the Marquis expected to see her display—for the usual manners of Adelaide were so meek and gentle, that he imagined her incapable of the faintest resistance to his will. However, he continued fixed in his refusal, although he sought to soothe her with the tenderest expressions of affection and care; and at length succeeded in diverting her thoughts from Henrietta, by speaking of the intelligence he hoped soon to receive both from Lisbon and Brazil.

After asking Adelaide several questions relative to the estates which her father had purchased in Gascony, he enquired whether she had heard that any will had ever been made by the late Count, and placed in the hands of a lawyer at Bayonne? affirming, as his motive for asking the question, that his brother had in one of his letters hinted such a circumstance.

Adelaide now recollected that some pri-

vate transaction had taken place between her father and a stranger, whom she had never seen but once, and that soon after her mother's death; but of what nature the secret transaction was she was ignorant. The probability of her father's having made a will at that period now struck her; and with artless ingenuousness she related the circumstance to the Marquis, who heard her with particular marks of attention and interest; and then said, that he should order an immediate investigation of that business.

Adelaide now once more attempted to induce him to revoke his determination respecting Henrietta; but soon desisted, as she perceived all her efforts to that purpose would be unavailing. Dispirited and affected with a thousand afflicting recollections, which the enquiries of the Marquis had awakened in her mind, she returned to her own apartments, to weep in the most gloomy solitude the wreck of all her happiness.

Till

Till this moment Adelaide had been unconscious of how much she was indebted to the affection and friendship of Henrietta, who with unceasing solicitude had strove to divert her mind from dwelling on the loss of her father, and the cruel transition she had experienced; but now, when in silence and seclusion, every image of past woes and anticipated sorrows pressed upon her heart, she wept in a transport of unutterable grief; her dread and aversion to the Marquis became confirmed and unchangeable; and she resolved to quit the castle, even at the hazard of her life, could she also secure the flight of Henrietta, for whose safety she involuntarily began to feel some alarm.

Calmed in some degree by the soothing voice of hope, which whispered success, Adelaide descended to dinner in the apartments of the Marchioness, and once more beheld Henrietta, who answered the affectionate and concerned looks of her friend with a smile of significance, which spoke

to Adelaide that she meditated some plan which she hoped to accomplish.

Both the lovely girls were now obliged to attend to another long admonition from the Marchioness, who, however, seemed rather affected at her lord's having so peremptorily separated the young friends; and even promised, that could Miss Vernor convince the Marquis that she did not intend to alienate the affections and duteous regards of his niece from him, she would intercede for some mitigation of the severe restriction he had commanded.

Adelaide now ventured to assure the Marchioness, that her friend was innocent of the charge; but the deluded lady had too much confidence in her lord, to suffer her to imagine that he could err on any point, though she allowed he might be mistaken as to the degree of Miss Vernor's fault.

Both Adelaide and Henrietta soon perceived that any attempt at vindication would be received as a reproachful accusation

sation of the Marquis, and therefore forbore to speak further on the subject.

As the Marquis was absent, and no company came in, the Marchioness could not dispense with her usual method of passing the remainder of the evening in solitude, and giving the keys of a library and music-room to Adelaide, she dismissed both the young ladies—the one to her own apartments, and the other to the embroidering-room.

CHAP. XVIII.

WITH slow and faltering steps, poor Adelaide traversed the hall and galleries leading to her rooms, while tears again stole down her pale cheeks. No lively companion would now beguile the heavy hours of their tedious length, or chear her depressed spirits with the animating voice of hope; but one long unvaried scene of solitary misery presented its frightful images to her mind. Tears dimmed her eyes, and she was compelled to lean for support against the ballustrade of a corridor, on which a passage leading to the apartments she occupied opened.

A slight

A slight noise near her caused her to suddenly raise her head, and she looked wildly around. The evening was so dark and lowering, that few objects were perceptible by the light admitted through the high casements, which run along one side of the hall, and which the corridor surrounded on three sides; but there was sufficient light to enable her to perceive a very tall figure, cloathed in white, glide swiftly past her, and enter a room at the extremity of the corridor.

A mind so unnerved by sorrow as was that of Adelaide, could not suffer her to view this object without feeling the most fearful horror; she knew that the room which the figure had entered was uninhabited, and that it was usually locked, as it communicated with her late apartment by a long suite of rooms, which extended along one side of the castle.

This circumstance now rushing full on her recollection, almost deprived her of sense; and she would have fallen lifeless

on the floor, had not the sudden appearance of Marcella with lights recalled her to animation.

The woman perceiving her young lady leaning almost motionless on the ballustrade, attributed her weakness to indisposition, and with much tenderness led her into her apartment, where a violent flood of tears relieved in some degree the dreadful oppression of her heart.

A faint and momentary sensation of satisfaction was now experienced by Adelaide, on learning that Marcella was for the future to pass the night in her apartments; and that during her absence to dinner, a bed had been placed for her attendant on a large old-fashioned couch in a closet within her chamber.

Although extremely anxious to relate the circumstance of her having seen some human form enter the apartment at the other end of the corridor, yet Adelaide was too prudent to hazard exciting the fears of poor Marcella, who spoke of the Marquis

Marquis having deprived her dear Mademoiselle of Miss Vernor's company, as the most cruel thing he had done for some time.

From the extreme loquacity of this woman, Adelaide had often received hints of the Marquis's character, which seemed to justify all the fears of St. Croix; and she now ventured to ask Marcella, whether the faults of her uncle were as well known to the surrounding country as they appeared to be to his domestics?

"Why pretty nearly so, Mademoiselle," replied the old woman, with a significant smile; "every body isn't like our poor lady, who, good soul, would no more believe her lord is what he is, than that the moon's a snowball. Don't think ill of me, young lady, for speaking in this way of your uncle; but I have been long in the family, and have seen a great deal, and if I didn't like you now, as well as I once did my lord, your father, I should be as mum as any of them—for unless I could

do

it was not for him, the Marquis would not be half as bad as he is."

"And the Marchioness is really ignorant of all this?" said Adelaide, in a tone of doubt.

"She doesn't guess a word of it, Mademoiselle, but thinks, poor soul, that her lord spends all his money upon the poor; and as none of the servants could do her any good by telling her anything about the matter, she is very likely never to hear of it. Once, indeed, a poor silly scullion took it into her head to tell my lady something, and all she got for her pains was to be turned out of the castle that very hour; and so you see, Mademoiselle, 'tis no use to try to open the eyes of some people. But pray, young lady, have you no other relation than the Marquis, that you are obliged to stay here till your intended lord, the Count St.Croix, returns from the wars?"

Adelaide, weeping, replied in the negative to this question; and Marcella again shook

shook her head, saying—"Now, if that Mademoiselle Henrietta had not been a heretic, something might have been planned by her; but there's no good ever came of trusting to a heretic to help one out of a scrape; she is very good-natured, and very lively, and very fond of you, Mademoiselle—but then, she's a heretic."

In vain Adelaide now endeavoured to remove Marcella's prejudice against her friend; the old woman continued obstinately to adhere to her own opinion; she, however, voluntarily proposed to consider what could be done to set Adelaide at liberty, and soon after retired to her closet, leaving her young lady, as she supposed, in a deep slumber.

Alas! Adelaide felt not the balmy influence of sleep pervade her senses; her harrassed mind was intently occupied by a train of the most tormenting reflections, and untired fancy recalled to her recollection every image which could appal and grieve her—the remembrance of the happy hours

hours of her youth—the loss of her father—the absence of St. Croix—her own singularly mysterious situation, and the apparently but too certain conviction that her uncle was a deceptive and dangerous character, from whom she had the most dreadful evils to apprehend, were heart-rending subjects of meditation, which almost deprived her of power to think with the faintest degree of composure on the means of extricating herself from the terrors which appeared to surround her. Wearied at length with unavailing and agonizing reflections, she insensibly sunk into a disturbed and broken sleep—from which she soon started shrieking with terror.

Marcella heard her cries, and was instantly at the bedside. As she drew aside the curtain, Adelaide shrunk back in an agony of fright, wildly exclaiming—

"Oh, Holy Saints! suffer me not again to behold that dreadful vision."

"What vision, my dear young lady?" cried

cried the trembling Marcella, clinging to the curtains.

"It was then but a dream.—Oh, such a dream!" murmured Adelaide, while her frame shuddered convulsively. "Yet could the work of imagination alone represent that dreadful nun, so like the horrible reality of her appearance."

"Nun!" exclaimed Marcella, "Oh, my lady, what nun?"

"The cruel, the inhuman sister of Miserecordia!" answered Adelaide, seemingly unconscious of what she said, till a deep groan from Marcella recalled her attention, when she beheld the old woman on her knees at the bedside, murmuring a prayer, and devoutly crossing herself.

"Oh, my dear young lady!—oh, Mademoiselle!—so you have dreamt of a terrible nun of the Order of Mercy!" said Marcella, slowly rising and tottering into a chair near the bed.—"Ay, ay, nobody would ever believe it, but now, I think it will all come to pass."

"What

"What will come to pass?" eagerly asked Adelaide, more and more alarmed by the unfeigned horror which marked the countenance of her ancient attendant, who, with another deep groan, replied—

"Why the ruin—the utter ruin of the St. Viviers' family, Mademoiselle; as it was long since foretold, that the last male heir of the house of St. Viviers should perish by the hand of a nun—the Saints guard us!—of a nun of the Order of Miserecordia."

That this fatal prediction had been but too nearly accomplished, Adelaide had in the death of her father received a most woeful conviction; and the renewed recollection of that horrible fact, and the terrific impression of her recent dream, almost deprived her of her senses. Breathless and pale she sunk on her pillow, and it was some time ere Marcella could restore her to animation and sensibility.

When Marcella imagined her young lady was so far recovered that she could attend

attend to her, she asked Adelaide if she had ever read the old tale of the "Sister of Mercy" since she had come to the castle?

Mademoiselle St. Viviers faintly answered in the negative—"Then you may read it as soon as you please, Mademoiselle," said the old woman, "for it is only kept in an old book-case in the large suite of rooms at the opposite end of the corridor; it's dusty and dirty enough, I warrant, for those rooms have been opened but once these fifteen years. My lord did not think the history of the "Sister of Mercy" worth keeping in his fine library, and so he sent one of the servants to put it, with a sight of old romances and tales which are in the book-case, in those rooms; and there it was like to stay safe enough, for such noises have been heard all through that suite, and the one you first slept in, that not one of the servants would venture there for five louis—not that I wish for anything for venturing there for the story

story for you, Mademoiselle, for I think it is right that you should see it, that you may be able to tell whether your dream agrees with it.—And now pray, Mademoiselle, what did you dream?"

Adelaide was too weak and too ill to be able to relate her dream, or continue her conversation with Marcella, who now perceiving the inability of her young lady, warmly recommended her to endeavour to sleep, promising at the same time to watch by her couch during the remainder of the night.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIX.

WHEN Adelaide arose from her troubled slumbers, she felt her mind more than ever depressed and sorrowful; and soon her anxious thoughts reverted from the appalling visions of the night to her beloved Henrietta Vernor, whose consoling friendship she so well knew could calm all the agitations of her soul. In vain poor Marcella now praised the chocolate and nice fruits and cakes. Adelaide had no appetite for either; and scarce had the almost untasted breakfast been removed, when she received a billet from the Marchioness, expressing extreme regret at her illness,

and at not being able, consistent with prudence and the wishes of the Marquis, to suffer Miss Vernor to visit her beloved niece.

Adelaide now received added grief from the perusal of this billet, as its contents brought the sad conviction, that the society of her friend was indeed an indulgence which she perceived she must not hope to enjoy out of the apartments belonging to the Marchioness; and although so averse to company, she resolved to struggle with her feelings, and attend at dinner.

To divert her thoughts from dwelling on the painful subjects which but too much oppressed them, Adelaide now mentioned to Marcella her intention of visiting the library and music-room; and the old woman, who by no means liked close confinement, arose with alacrity to attend her young lady in her proposed survey of the castle. But as they walked along the corridor, Marcella paused at the door of the suit of uninhabited rooms, in which was the

the book-case, containing the History of the Sister of Miserecordia.

With emotions of mingled fear and horror, Adelaide beheld Marcella take down a bunch of rusty keys, which hung on a brass hook near the door, through which she had seen the figure so rapidly disappear on the preceding evening.

The difficulty which the ancient domestic found in unlocking this door, afforded to the terrified mind of Adelaide what appeared to be a convincing proof, that the object she had beheld was not a being of the terrestrial world, and she entered the rooms with sensations of awe and fear, which their gloomy appearance was not calculated to repress.

The uncouth tapestry and massy mouldering furniture seemed to be coeval with the castle, and the broken casements, rattling in the breeze, and half covered with the dust of ages, gave an air of the most dreadful desolation to all around, which the sadness of a bleak northern aspect did not

tend to diminish. The suit consisted of six large rooms, all equally dismal; and in the farthest of these stood the ponderous book-case, whose heavy black cornices and fretwork doors were festooned with innumerable cobwebs.

"This is, indeed, the abode of melancholy," sighed Adelaide, as she gazed on the decaying tapestry, which had once represented in glaring colours the sacking of Troy.

"Ay, melancholy enough in truth, Mademoiselle," replied Marcella, busily endeavouring to open the door of the book-case, "for it has not been inhabited these sixty years at least—not that I ever heard any reason for that but the noises, and that to be sure was reason enough. But look, Mademoiselle, see." She now took down a huge folio, under the weight of which she had almost fallen. "This is the famous History of Cassandra;" and there, pointing to a smaller book, "there is Godfrey of Boulogne, and that is the Grand Cyrus;

Cyrus; and yonder is Clebia.—Oh, Mademoiselle, if you was not so sad and sorrowful, what delight you might find in reading all these noble books! I've heard a deal of them in my younger days, and I'm not so old yet as not to enjoy a love tale. I protest the young Count, your intended, put me in mind of Amadis de Gaul, so handsome, and so gallant—but, dear me, where is this "Sister of Mercy?" Oh, there it is. Pray, Mademoiselle, help me to draw this old chair close to the book-case, for the story we want is placed up so high that I cannot reach it."

Marcella laid down her Cassandra, and, assisted by Adelaide, contrived to draw the chair to the book-case; but she had scarcely drawn the manuscript from beneath several books which lay over it, when, with a violent shriek, she sprung to the ground, and ran towards the door, with a degree of rapidity which in age appeared incredible.

Adelaide followed her with trembling

haste, calling in vain to learn the cause of her fright; but Marcella, heedless of her cries, fled as fast as she could, nor stopped till she got into the corridor, where her strength seemed entirely to fail, for, begging Adelaide to lock the door and come away as quick as possible, she hobbled on to the apartments of her young lady, and sunk almost fainting into a chair. When, at length, by the kind assiduities of Adelaide, the old woman regained some composure, she said, that she had seen the head of a beautiful young lady in the book-case.

Adelaide would have felt more inclined to smile at this assertion than to have believed it, had she not witnessed the mysterious manner in which the figure that had alarmed herself had entered the room; and as she could not urge anything against the possibility of the appearance which Marcella affirmed she had seen, she endeavoured to lessen the terrors of the old woman, by saying, that she had probably

bably been terrified by some ancient bust, which might have been thrown into the book-case.

"A bust, Mademoiselle!" exclaimed Marcella, half offended at the idea of her discernment being questioned—"a bust! Don't you think I know the difference between a marble bust and a head with eyes—staring eyes and hair? Why, Mademoiselle, I saw it as plainly as I now see you. Mercy on me! It was looking at me so fierce and terribly, that I thought, for all it seemed so young and handsome, that flames of fire were coming out of its eyes. Ay, ay, I make no doubt but 'tis the restless spirit of one of those poor girls whom my Lord has carried to the Chevalier's. I thought I had some recollection of the face. Ay, now I have it. It was the very image of the poor young Savoyard."

"The young Savoyard! Who was she?"

"A poor hurdy-gurdy girl, very pretty though, who came one day to play at the

gate of the castle; my Lord and the Chevalier Bionville went to the porter's room to hear her, and soon afterwards I learned she was seen very fine at the Chevalier's; so we all guessed what would come of it—and you see, Mademoiselle, I was right, for she was abandoned, and died in great distress."

A female servant now rapped at the door, to inform Adelaide that the Marchioness was waiting dinner; and she was obliged to attend this summons before she could question Marcella any farther, who, fearing to remain alone, followed her to the door of the dining parlour.

The eyes of Henrietta sparkled with joy on the entrance of her friend; and the Marchioness testified no small degree of pleasure on seeing Adelaide, who would have thought herself repaid for the irksome hours she had passed, could she have found an opportunity of speaking a few minutes in private to Henrietta, who she imagined seemed to affect a reserve of manner

manner towards her, while the arch smile, which sometimes played on her features, and a certain whimsical look, intimated more than Adelaide could comprehend. Just, however, as she was on the point of bidding the Marchioness adieu for the evening, Henrietta, as if accidentally passing her, slipped a small billet into her hand.

Eager to examine its contents, Adelaide immediately hastened to her own room, and, in the ardour of her curiosity, forgot even the terrific door on the corridor. With what emotions of wonder and delight then did she decypher a few lines written with a pencil, which were as follows:—

"If my dear Adelaide can again venture to enter the room which contains the old-fashioned book-case she was examining this morning, I will meet her there at twelve this night. But come alone."

The recollection of Marcella's terrific vision of the head in the book-case now seemed fully explained to Adelaide, who instantly conceived that her friend had discovered some secret entrance into those deserted rooms. Rejoiced at a circumstance which promised to afford her the happiness of sometimes meeting Henrietta, whose affection and advice were so dear and important to her, Adelaide sought, by every mental argument which religion and reason could suggest, to subdue the superstitious terrors which still involuntarily pervaded her mind.

But as our efforts to overcome such alarms but too frequently produce effects exactly contrary to what we wish, she soon found, that by dwelling on the subject with a view of reasoning herself out of her fears, she had conjured up a thousand images of the most terrifying nature, and had so forcibly recalled to her imagination the horrible figure which had visited her late apartments, that, as the hour of twelve approached,

approached, she felt her spirits sink, and so heavy an oppression steal o'er her mind, that she almost determined not to venture into those deserted and melancholy chambers that night. But when she reflected, that if she could not summon up sufficient courage to keep the appointment, she might probably never have another opportunity of seeing her friend alone, she felt compelled to exert all her fortitude, and she sought, by passing an hour in fervent devotion, to calm her mind, and obtain resolution to undertake the gloomy adventure, which she at length determined to attempt. She had dismissed Marcella to her couch at an early hour; and, as the ancient attendant usually sunk into a profound sleep, Adelaide did not fear any interruption from her.

The composure which was the reward of her earnest petitions to Heaven, enabled her to hear without much emotion the great clock over the eastern portal of the castle slowly beat the hour of twelve;

but a tremulous agitation seized her as she took up the night lamp from the wide hearth of her room; and this painful agitation increased as, with hurried steps, and eyes fixed in terror on the floor, she glided along the corridor. She did not, however, encounter any cause for alarm, till, on passing through the second room of the suit, she fancied she perceived a shadowy figure precede her into the third. The lamp burned dim, but the affrighted Adelaide had but too plainly perceived the outline of some object retreating hastily before her, not to be well assured that no illusion of sight could have produced such an effect. The tremor of her nerves now increased so violently, that she was compelled to set down the lamp, and lean against the carved pillar of a window near which she stood, while fearful of beholding some dreadful and appalling form, she involuntarily closed her eyes. In the next moment she fancied she heard a loud and frightful breathing close to her ear, and imagined

imagined that she felt the heavy pressure of a cold hand on her shoulder. In an agony of horror she sunk breathless on the floor; but was soon recalled to life by the sound of loud and dismal moans, and the voice of Henrietta, in whose arms she found herself clasped—while licking her hands, and moaning at her feet, lay a large white wolf-dog.

"My dear Adelaide, my beloved friend," whispered Miss Vernor, as perceiving her recover, "I shall never forgive myself for having in part occasioned you so much alarm."

Adelaide, the moment she beheld the dog, conjectured that it must have been the object which had terrified her, and she now, after mentioning the circumstance, enquired to whom the animal belonged?

Henrietta declared that she knew not, as she had never seen it, till, on hearing its moans, she had entered the room, and found it standing beside Adelaide.—"This

is

is a most extraordinary circumstance, however," continued Henrietta; "it did not enter the room with you, you say, Adelaide, and I have never till now beheld it. Surely there must be some other secret entrance to these apartments, by which this dog found his way hither. But he seems to know you. Observe how calmly he has lain down at your feet, and how he watches your least motion."

Adelaide involuntarily patted the head of the dog, who now immediately jumped up, and testified his joy by a thousand gambols.

The young friends looked at each other with amazement. At length Henrietta said—"This animal has deranged all I intended to say to you, for his appearance so fully convinces me that there is some outlet from these rooms unknown to us, that I cannot rest till I have discovered it. Were you able to rise, my dear Adelaide, I would lead you round the apartments, that,

that, by observing where the dog might go out, we may secure to ourselves the means of escape."

Adelaide, to whom such a hope would have given new energy, had she dared to encourage it, now arose, and assuring her friend that she was quite well enough to make the experiment, took her arm, and they proceeded into the adjoining room, whither the dog accompanied them, holding between his teeth the robe of Adelaide.

This incident heightened the astonishment of the friends. If they paused, the animal stood still, and whichsoever way they walked, he moved by the side of Adelaide, till, reaching a part of the last room, he suddenly dropped her robe, and run towards a corner where the tapestry hung loosely, and whined for her to follow him.

An instantaneous dread of finding some object of horror in that obscure part of the room suddenly seized the mind of both;

both; and some moments elapsed ere they had sufficient courage to resolve on approaching the spot where the dog still stood crying. They now found, on turning aside the tapestry, a broken sliding pannel standing half open.

This discovery afforded both Adelaide and Henrietta unfeigned joy; for it appeared certain, that the long passage into which the pannel opened must lead somewhere beyond the castle walls, for how else, thought each, could the dog have wandered into these apartments, since they were sure he did not belong to the castle.

The lateness of the hour, and the weak state of Adelaide, would not permit of exploring the passage that night; therefore, after resolving to make the attempt on the following, they sat down on the worm-eaten remains of an old sofa, Henrietta having said she had something of importance to communicate.

The dog now again stretched himself at the feet of Adelaide, and would have again deeply

deeply engaged the wondering attention of the young friends, had not the flight of time warned them, that, as they could not continue long together, they must not neglect the opportunity of conversing on their critical situations.

"I have not beheld the Marquis since the day of our separation," said Henrietta; "he is, indeed, frequently in the apartments of his lady, but as almost all my time is spent in the embroidering-room, you must suppose I cannot learn any of the intentions of the Marquis; and the old women, to whose society I am confined, seem to be as ignorant of what passes in the castle as the Marchioness or myself. My persecution respecting the Chevalier Bionville is, however, not yet concluded. The Marchioness deigned to talk most earnestly to me about the splendour and happiness I might enjoy with him; and he himself has sent me, by the hands of his ward, a most passionately tender epistle, and a handsome casket of valuable

able jewels—a present which I immediately returned, much against the advice of the Marchioness, and to the but too apparent joy of the Chevalier de Valmont, who contrived, when he presented to me the letter and casket from his guardian, to give into my hands a small packet, which, he whispered, contained his own history for your perusal, which he begged I would do him the honour of first looking over, ere I presented it to you. This I did last night, and found in the envelope of the packet a letter, containing a most respectful declaration of affection, and an entreaty, should I not think proper to reject his suit, for permission to apply to my friends when he visited England, whither he expected to travel on some political concern in less than a month. To you, my friend, I will not deny that this declaration has given me pleasure; but I fear my brother's opinions will not render him agreeable to my union with a foreigner. However this is not of moment at present.

Your

Your situation, and your concerns, are the most important subjects on which we have to speak. The Marchioness is so completely duped by your mysterious uncle, that all hopes of friendship or protection from her are vain; for no human power could make her credit the possibility of her lord's being capable of an act of injustice—nay, she applauds his conduct towards me in the warmest terms, especially as she has found that I am, as she says—'a confirmed heretic.' Escape is therefore the only means of avoiding dangers, which seem more dreadful, from the circumstance of our not exactly knowing what we have to apprehend."

Adelaide, when Henrietta ceased, informed her of the character Marcella had given of both the Marquis and Bionville; she then mentioned the anxiety and grief she suffered respecting St. Croix.—"And since I have lost your friendly support, Henrietta," continued the lovely afflicted girl, while sad tears coursed each other down

The timid and harrassed mind of Adelaide would have rendered this new shock almost fatal to her, had she been alone; but fortunately Henrietta, although infinitely alarmed at the singular and awful incident which had just occurred, possessed that happy presence of mind and well-assumed resolution, which enabled her to quiet in some degree the terrors of her young companion, whom she insisted should no longer remain in these frightful chambers.

Adelaide would have most gladly departed, had not her reluctance to leave Henrietta inclined her to stay. "Dear Henrietta," said she, casting at the same time a fearful glance around the spacious and gloomy chamber, "but how will you go hence?"

Henrietta briefly explained that there was an opening in the book-case which communicated with her bed-room, through which she could instantly pass when she had seen her safe along the corridor.—"I

heard your voice and that of Marcella this morning," continued she, "and that circumstance led me to discover a secret sliding board in the wainscot of my own room; a discovery in which, as it furnished the means of our meeting, I rejoiced. But come, dear Adelaide, let me support you from this horrid place."

This Adelaide strongly opposed, as she could not endure the idea of suffering her friend to remain alone in the scene of their alarms. Henrietta, however, was positive, averring that the dog would be a sufficient safeguard for her; but when they had reached the door of the outward apartment, to which the animal had followed Adelaide, no entreaties or patting could induce him to return into the rooms without her; and, on perceiving that the dog appeared inclined not to quit her side, she insisted on remaining at the door till Henrietta should have run through the suit to the room where the book-case stood, and where her own lamp remained burning;

as,

as, from the situation of the doors, there was a full view from one end of the suit to the other, Adelaide could perceive when Henrietta disappeared: and now with hasty care she locked the door, and, still followed by her new protector, proceeded to her own room, into which the dog sprang before her, and took his station at the door of the anti-chamber, from whence even the voice of Adelaide could not induce him to move.

CHAP.

CHAP. XX.

AT an early hour in the morning, Adelaide was awakened from her uneasy slumbers, by the vociferous exclamations of surprise which Marcella uttered, when she first beheld the large dog crouched at the door of the anti-room.

"Oh, Mademoiselle!" cried the astonished attendant, "how came poor Cæsar into this apartment?—surely I locked the door last night before I went to bed, and how can the dog have got in?—Have you been out of the room last night, Mademoiselle?"

Unaccustomed to the practice of falsehood

hood or evasion, Adelaide felt confused and vexed at this question; but as she had reflected that she must account in some manner for the appearance of the animal, and in the present instance dared not hazard an acknowledgement of the truth, she was compelled to answer evasively; and therefore said—"that being alarmed in the night by the moans of the dog, she had opened the door which led into the corridor, and that the animal had come in and could not afterwards be driven out."

This explanation perfectly satisfied Marcella, who now informed Adelaide that the dog had once belonged to her father.—"Poor Cæsar," continued she, "was not above a year old when the Count your father so suddenly quitted the castle, and the poor old animal has been here upon sufferance ever since. Nobody has ever taken any notice of him but me and Jaques. Indeed there is but one man-servant in the house, who was here when your father, young lady, lived at home—

and

and that's old Jaques the porter, who loves Cæsar dearly, and he will be in trouble enough when he misses him, for the dog mostly bides in the porter's rooms at the gate. But I suppose he is come after me —poor Cæsar! thou art not the first that has been left almost friendless in a hard world."

Tears of remembrance and regret now stole from the eyes of Adelaide on the mention of her father, and instantly calling the animal to her side, she patted his head, while the dog, as if sensible of this proof of feeling and kindness, looked in her face, and, resting his ragged head on her knee, laid down at her feet.

There was something so expressive of the instinctive affection which animals sometimes so singularly and suddenly conceive for particular persons, that this action of poor Cæsar furnished Marcella with an inexhaustible theme for conversation; and it was not till Adelaide had twice desired her to inform the Marchioness that she was

not well enough to attend at breakfast, that Marcella ceased to relate the exploits of Cæsar, who was now represented as the most mild and sagacious of his kind.

The impatience of Adelaide to peruse the contents of the packet given her by Henrietta, caused her to hurry over her breakfast, and dismiss Marcella as soon as she could. The latter had succeeded in drawing Cæsar away; but no sooner had the dog received some food, than he contrived to find this way back to the apartments of Adelaide, near whom he again took his station, and slept at her feet; as she read the little narrative of the Chevalier de Valmont, whom she now found was an orphan, left to the care of the Chevalier de Bionville at the early age of three years. "De Bionville, my guardian," continued DeValmont, "has hitherto fulfilled his duty towards me, as far as relates to my education. Conscious that his atheistical principles and sensual manners were not precisely calculated to win my affection, or ensure

ensure my respect, he has always entrusted me to the care of others—'for,' as he once was heard to say to a friend, who asked him wherefore he suffered me to imbibe opinions so contrary to his own, 'this boy,' said he, 'if I permit him to remain with me, such is the force of early example, will imitate my manners and habits, and thus become the same wild, ungovernable being that I am myself; and this is exactly what I wish to avoid. Now, if I place him with some of those men whom the world styles pious, sensible, and learned, he will be obedient, tractable, and unsuspicious—and these qualifications will render him the very character I ardently desire to see him.' According to this plan I have been educated, Mademoiselle; and however I may find myself inclined to quarrel with the Chevalier de Bionville, for peremptorily and invariably refusing to inform me who my parents were, or the full extent of my future expectations, I am yet most truly grateful for the numerous advantages

I have derived from his rigid adherence to his unaccountable motives for securing me from the temptations of vice and immorality. I have been some years in the army, but I entered it with fixed principles, and have therefore happily escaped the attractions of dissipation. But pardon this egotism—my earnest desire of obtaining your confidence has led me beyond the bounds of propriety. I will hasten to relate the particulars of my first acquaintance with the Count St. Croix. About fourteen months since I was at Bayonne, and there accident led me several times into the company of the Count. Our manners and principles seemed similar, and the commencement of a sincere friendship took place between us in those interviews. But a sudden recall to my regiment parted us, just as my friend was on the eve of introducing me at the Chateau de Arrancy, where you, Mademoiselle, then resided with your father. We saw each other no more till the night on which you

experienced

experienced so dreadful an alarm in the chambers you so lately inhabited. But to explain this circumstance, I must inform you, that two days prior to that event, I arrived at the house of my guardian in Grenoble, which town is, I believe you know, not many leagues distant from the castle. The first intelligence I learned from De Bionville was, that a young nobleman, called the Count St. Croix, and a newly-discovered niece of the Marquis St. Viviers, were then at the castle; and that your union with the Count St. Croix was expected to take place when you had compleated your mourning for your father, who with regret I learnt had recently died.

"Eager to behold my friend, my intimacy with whom was not known to my guardian, I prevailed upon him to take me to the castle on the day following; but I saw not the Count, who was absent during our visit.

"The next day we again intended to come to the castle, but were disappointed by

the arrival of a courier, who brought some letters for my guardian. These letters, I imagine, contained something important for the Marquis St. Viviers to know, for we set off for the castle at nine o'clock at night. We did not arrive till near twelve, and all the family, except the Marquis, whom it appeared expected us, had retired.

"As we were now to sleep in the castle, I enjoyed the idea of certainly beholding St. Croix in the morning; and when I was conducted to a chamber, I felt more inclined to indulge in the pleasing anticipation of seeing my friend, than to court the influence of sleep. My guardian and the Marquis had also retired to their respective apartments.

"By no means inclined to sleep, the idea of retiring to bed was irksome to me; and accidentally finding an ancient volume of provincial ballads among many others on a table, I sat down to amuse myself with the wild and pleasing flights of the poet,

and

and soon found my attention so insensibly engaged by the wondrous tales of love and war, that I was surprised when I heard the clock of the castle strike one. At that moment, ere the hollow vibration of the deep-toned clock had ceased, I heard a rustling in a dark corner of the room, and looking hastily towards the spot, beheld a ghastly figure glide swiftly across the room; but before I could perceive which way it vanished, another human form, habited exactly like the first, and bearing in one hand a lamp and in the other a dagger, rushed in, and was swiftly following the first, when perceiving me it stopped. 'I advanced, and discovered in this pale terrific being the Count St. Croix.'"

Adelaide trembled so violently while reading this passage, that some minutes elapsed ere she had power to hold the manuscript with steadiness. At length, uttering a fervent aspiration, she read on—

"I will not attempt, Mademoiselle, to describe the horror and amazement with

which I was seized, as St. Croix, in a tone of wild impatience, cried—'Detain me not, De Valmont—I know you, but I cannot now rejoice in our meeting—the blood of some murdered being surely calls for vengeance! Accompany my dreadful pursuit of that horrible phantom, or remain behind in silence—alarm not the household, as you value the peace of the departed.'

"He was flying from me, when, catching up my sword and a lamp, I followed him. —'This way he vanished,' said St. Croix, and turning aside a part of the hangings, we discovered a low door. We passed through, and entered on the head of a deep and narrow flight of stone steps. We descended, and, at the extremity of a long passage, perceived a pale blue glimmering light. St. Croix redoubled his speed. The light gradually disappeared, and we reached the termination of the passage, where we found a large door thickly plated with iron. It easily yielded, and admitted us into

into a vaulted cellar. Irresolute how to proceed farther, we paused, when, on casting my eyes towards an arched recess in the wall, I perceived the same dreadful figure which had preceded the Count into my room, swiftly gliding away through a ruinous aperture in the recess.

"Unable to speak, I slightly touched the shoulder of St. Croix, and pointed out to him the horrid figure, just as it disappeared in the gloomy obscurity beyond the arch.

"The Count rushed onwards after it, and I followed him into a long winding passage, the misty vapours of which effectually screened the retreating object of our alarm and pursuit. Still we both continued to proceed, although our steps were constantly impeded by broken fragments from the mouldering arched roof above our heads.

"Just as we reached the termination of the passage, we suddenly caught a full view of the ghastly form which we had

followed. It stood motionless in the low door-way of a dungeon, and its look fixed on us with a horrible expression of severity. It waved a thin and boney hand, as if motioning us not to approach farther—and in the next moment, a blaze of sulphurous flame seemed to envelope the shadowy figure, and it then vanished from our view.

"Amazement held myself and St. Croix as if spell-bound for a few moments, till the smoke clearing away, the Count, regardless of the evident injunction to retreat, which we had just received, sprung towards the low door-way, but instantly found that the door was now shut, and fastened so firmly, that all our united efforts to force it open could not succeed. At length, wearied by fruitless attempts, we agreed to return, and renew our endeavours to open the door on the night following; but, on turning, with an intention of going back to our chambers, we now perceived two passages, and could not

not recollect by which we had arrived at the small open space into which the low door opened. After some moments hesitation, we took that which branched off to the right hand, and reached, as we imagined, the vaulted cellar into which the figure had first led us, and then proceeded up a few stone steps, that brought us into another large vault. Here an instantaneous conviction that we had mistaken our way seized my mind, and I communicated my thoughts to the Count, who had, however, been so entirely engrossed by the phantom we had followed, that he did not perceive that we were wrong; and, on my assuring him that we had not passed through two vaults, he imagined that I was mistaken, and instantly commenced a strict search round the vault for the narrow stone steps leading up to his chamber; and, as I could not positively affirm to the contrary, I assisted in his research, till suddenly feeling one of my feet entangled in something which lay in my way, I felt

on a heap of loose stones and rubbish, which giving way under my weight, I felt my hand press upon what I with horror conceived to be a human scull;—the cold and humid touch froze my heart. I sprang up, and calling in a voice of terror on the Count, drew him to the spot, where, after a few minutes spent in removing some of the rubbish, we discovered the mouldered remains of a man, some remnant of whose decayed garments had lain from beneath the covering, and had entangled my foot.

"For some moments we both stood gazing in horror on this fearful spectacle; but soon St. Croix started, and exclaiming—'Look!—look!—Oh phantom of the murdered, soon shalt thou be appeased!' directed my attention to the spot towards which his eyes were turned, when I suddenly perceived the figure which had led us into the vaults. Involuntarily impelled, I moved towards it, when, with a deep and heavy groan, it seemed to clasp its shadowy hands, and vanished from my sight.

"Awed

"Awed and silent, I stepped back, and now my eyes fell on something which glittered brilliantly from amid the rubbish, which still half concealed the almost skeleton remains of him, whose spirit I no longer doubted had thus led us to the discovery of murder. I stooped and found several jewels, and a long dagger, the blade of which being encrusted with blood, seemed to confirm all my fears.

"St. Croix, in horror-stricken silence, assisted my search, and we soon discovered a small half-decayed pocket-book. There was nothing in it but the torn fragment of a letter, and of this almost all the writing was effaced. But, oh! there was sufficient left to inform us whom we might suspect as the murderer of the person whose remains we had seen. The only legible words were these—'Even should St. Viviers be my destroyer, I must go—and may not he raise the assassin's knife against one, whose ——'

"Thus far only could we decypher the time-

time-obliterated lines; but what we had seen was, alas! but too well calculated to excite our most alarming suspicions.

"Some time elapsed ere we could recover from the horror which had seized our faculties; but when at length we were capable of speaking, I ejaculated—'What have we further to do, Count?' I spoke low, and a hollow murmuring sound seemed to reply to my words, while St. Croix said—'I know not—I am ignorant. We must first question the Marquis St. Viviers on this most dreadful discovery. Oh, if he is guilty!'

'Guilty!' repeated a faint voice, mournfully vibrating around the damp walls of the vault. Again we started. I could not endure the agony of horror which now seized my soul, and, grasping the arm of the Count, I wildly dragged him back through the long passages, and, without knowing how, we at length reached the narrow stone steps leading up into my room. Here St. Croix, overcome by the

the recollection of what he had beheld, sunk pale and breathless on a sofa, while I stood without motion, all my faculties apparently numbed by horror.

"For a considerable time neither of us spoke. At length the Count perceiving the light of the dawn breaking on the eastern horizon, said he must return to his room, ere the swift advance of day should discover him.

"I now begged he would inform me how he first became alarmed by the terrific object we had seen; and he briefly told me, that having received several mysterious billets, advising him of some hidden danger which awaited you, Mademoiselle, he had been induced, by the advice contained in one he received just as he was retiring to his room, to disguise himself in the habit which he then wore, and which, according to the directions given him in the note, he had found hid in a suit of deserted chambers in the castle. He then continued to say, that having disguised himself, and being provided

vided with a lamp and dagger, he had proceeded towards a dilapidated hall, where he had been assured he should meet the mysterious friend who had written to him. The Count then added, that he had not yet reached the hall, when he suddenly perceived, in a dark and narrow passage which led to it, a figure exactly habited as himself gliding quickly on before him.

"Apprehensive that the loneliness of the hour and place had affected his mind, and that he was alarmed by some illusion of his own imagination, he paused, and closed his eyes; but, on opening them again, he perceived the same figure, only now its countenance was turned towards him, and, like him, it paused.

"A cold chill froze his limbs as he gazed on this frightful object, which now waving its hand, beckoned him to follow.

"St. Croix, yielding to an impulse of desperate courage, obeyed, and followed it through many winding passages, broken staircases, and galleries, till it led him into my

my room. What followed, Mademoiselle, I have already related.

" Conversing on the subject, we heeded not the lapse of time; and when we parted, it was so late, that my friend, in going to his room, was met by several of the servants, and also by the Marquis St. Viviers, whose amazement at seeing the Count in such a disguise was of course extreme, and led him to demand an immediate explanation. At first my friend determined to reveal the horrible discovery which he had made in the vaults, but suddenly recollecting that he could not account for his disguise, and for having wandered about the castle at such an hour, without betraying his secret and mysterious friend, he hesitated, and, after a few minutes consideration, resolved to preserve a strict silence on the subject. This determination, however, subjected the Count to the most unpleasant situation; and while he was thus perplexed, you, Mademoiselle, and your lovely friend, entered the room. The dispute

pute between the Marquis and the Count, you doubtless recollect, now ran high; and on your uncle's attempting to force you from the apartment, St. Croix was compelled to silence the rage of the Marquis, by whispering his discovery of the remains of some victim buried in the vaults. You now withdrew, and an explanation ensued; the particulars of which I am unacquainted with, as my friend is bound by a solemn oath to observe the utmost secrecy on the subject of that conversation. The result of this interview was, however, the Marquis's consenting to your union with the Count; but this consent was evidently feigned, as it appears certain that he has taken steps to have St. Croix recalled to the army. And now, Mademoiselle, suffer me, in the name of my friend, to entreat that you will permit me to assist you to leave this abode of mysteries. Call also to mind the warnings of the secret friend, whom the Count was prevented from meeting, by being led astray by the phantom

phantom which lured him into the vaults, and quit a place where I much fear that your youth and innocence, instead of giving you irresistible claims to protection, will only expose you to the cruelest injustice and perfidy. Suffer me then, Mademoiselle, to hope you will approve of my immediately devising some means for your escape. In a few days I fear I must be ready to depart; my anxiety in that case to place you in safety increases hourly. In France the power of your uncle may be successfully exerted to discover and regain you; there is, therefore, no alternative but that of quitting the kingdom; but should you not choose to proceed to England, I will conduct you to Amsterdam in Holland, where I have a friend, whose opulence and high respectability will render him worthy to protect you till the return of the Count. The lady of Mynheer Von Horsdt is a most amiable and accomplished woman; they have no family, and your society will afford them

them great pleasure. Deign, Mademoiselle, to consider this as a certain asylum, both for yourself and Miss Vernor, who has done me the honour to intimate to me her fixed resolution of not being separated from you, till she has had the felicity of seeing you happy with your amiable lover. I shall await, with unfeigned anxiety, the result of your considerations."—De Valmont now concluded his little narrative with again entreating Adelaide to avail herself of the opportunity which appeared likely to occur to leave the castle; and assured her of his most zealous efforts to assist her in accomplishing her escape.

These persuasions, however, were quite unnecessary—she had read the detail of De Valmont with sensations of the utmost dread and horror. His account of the ghastly remains he had discovered in the vault had made an indelible impression on her mind; and she more than suspected, that some person who had been too well acquainted with the secret mystery of the

Durancys,

Durancys, had been privately murdered and buried in the vault. Scarcely hesitating to believe the Marquis capable of the darkest crimes, she felt the most eager desire of being freed from his power; and, as soon as her trembling fingers could guide her pencil, she wrote a few lines to De Valmont, signifying her earnest wish of flying from the castle; and having carefully concealed the little manuscript he had sent her, she descended to the apartments of the Marchioness, though in a state very unfit to attend the dinner party.

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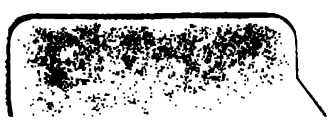
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